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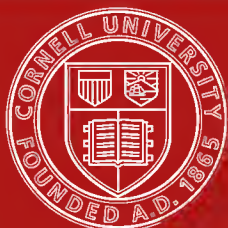
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# The Divine Comedy



LA DIVINA COMMEDIA

The Divine Comedy  
of  
Dante Alighieri

*A line-for-line translation  
in the rime-form of  
the original, by*

Melville Best Anderson

Presented at New York in a  
series of Edwin Guest



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## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

### I

As to the form and phrasing of this translation, a few explanations seem desirable. This is a line-for-line translation retaining the original rime-form,—*terza rima*, or triple rime. In using the expression "line-for-line translation," it is not meant to imply that every line will be found in the translation in the exact place where it is found in the original. The substance of every sentence or paragraph presents itself to the translator as material to be freely rehandled in accordance with the exigencies of the rime and the requirements of English idiom. It will be found that the number of lines in every canto of the translation corresponds to that of the original. In conformity with the genius of our language and the practice of our poets, the Italian hendecasyllabic line is rendered by the normal English line of ten syllables. As almost every Italian word ends with a vowel sound, the feminine or double rime, involving a line of eleven syllables, is normal in that language. To what issue the attempt to transplant the Italian eleven-syllable line into English leads, has been shown by the experiment of Lee-Hamilton with the *Inferno*. Like other poets of our tongue, I have introduced the eleven-syllable lines here and there, sometimes in considerable numbers, with a view to special expressiveness.

With respect to the choice of the English triple rime, I will frankly admit that the late Professor Charles Eliot Norton very strongly, although very kindly, advised me against it. Certainly there was little to encourage one in the results attained by those who had previously attempted to render the Poem in this form. To argue that because no one had succeeded with *terza rima* in English, failure was necessarily a foregone conclusion, seemed to me a plain begging of the question.

There was encouragement in the fact that Rossetti had succeeded beautifully in his translations of the minor poems in the original rime-forms, and that he, as well as Byron, had nobly rendered in triple rime the story of Francesca. In fact, the arguments against the attempt to translate Dante in the corresponding English meter were much on a plane with those raised against the attempts at the conquest of the Poles and of the Air. Twenty-one years ago, when I began this delightful labor, those conquests were still to make.

Twenty-one years is doubtless a long period to look forward to. Looking back, however, the time seems only too short, and I do not regret one hour of it. Should a friendly critic perchance admonish me that I ought to have tarried longer in Jericho, I should be inclined to agree with him. Parsons, a true poet, is said to have given a very much longer time to his brilliant experiment, leaving it after all only half done. Of the shortcomings of the present version I am, of course, more painfully aware than any one else can be. But I do think that in certain passages I have justified the choice of the triple rime as the form in which the translator can come nearest to the spirit and power of the great original. There were moments when I felt near the Master,—when he seemed to take the pen out of my hand and show me how the lines should read in English. Moments of happy, stimulating illusion, such as come to the translator as the supreme reward of fidelity!

To judge by much recent comment, Dante seems to be popularly known as the poet of the *Inferno*. In fact, persons who ought to know better have fallen into the loose habit of referring to the *Divine Comedy* as "Dante's *Inferno*." The *Inferno* has perhaps a hundred readers, where the *Purgatorio* has a score and the *Paradiso* one or two. Yet the two latter *Cantiche*



contain passages transcending in beauty and in moral significance anything in the *Inferno*. And to speak of my translation, inasmuch as I naturally gained in mastery of my difficult instrument as I proceeded, I believe my rendering of the *Paradiso* to be both technically and poetically superior to my rendering of the *Inferno*. I should be sorry, therefore, if any disappointed reader should lay down my version without looking at some of the later cantos. If the *Divine Comedy* be regarded as the Poet's spiritual autobiography, surely the *Inferno* must be essentially preliminary. The true center of the Poem, so considered, is found in the thirtieth and thirty-first cantos of *Purgatorio*.

With respect to the marginal notes, I wish to say that they of course make no claim to anything like completeness, being intended only as an unobtrusive running commentary to help the reader to slip through, or over, certain perplexing passages, so encouraging him to achieve the rather unusual feat of reading the whole *Divine Comedy* through at a few sittings. It is believed that this can be comfortably accomplished in the long winter evenings of a single week. I once read my translation of the whole *Inferno* to a friend at a single unbroken sitting.

To the longer notes which have been appended to certain cantos, I wish here to add the two following. The first is with respect to the pronoun of direct address. This is throughout the time-honored pronoun of the second person, "thou," with its corresponding forms. By this Dante and Virgil address each other; by this Dante addresses so great a personage as the Lady Matilda. This ordinary use of "thou" sets in marked relief the occasional exceptional use of "you" as the singular pronoun of direct address. The use of "you" is intended as a mark of the ceremonious respect due to royalty or superior rank. This is emphasized

by the Poet in the opening lines of *Paradiso* xvi. His use of "you" in that place in addressing his great ancestor is a sign of family pride, causing Beatrice to smile at the Poet's weakness. In *Purgatorio* xxxi, after Beatrice has assumed the remote and impersonal attitude of the judge, he uses this form in addressing her. He uses it out of reverence to Pope Adrian in *Purgatorio* xix. In the *Inferno* the Poet so addresses Farinata, the elder Cavalcanti, and Brunetto Latini, but not Pope Nicholas III. Wherever "thou (thy)" and "you (your)" are used in close connection, the reader may properly infer that different persons are thus referred to. For example, in *Inferno* xix, line 102, "thou" refers to Pope Nicholas, while in the next line but one "your" refers to the whole class to which he belongs.

The other note is with reference to the first line of the Invocation to the Muses, in the seventh line of the first canto of *Purgatorio*:

"Here let dead poesy arise again."

The commentators generally understand the words "dead poesy" to refer to the spiritual death which has been the subject of the Poem hitherto. But as our Poet teaches us to look in his verses for various phases of meaning (compare the famous letter to Can Grande), the question properly arises whether beside the allegorical, or moral, or anagogical meaning, there is not a meaning which, being on the surface, is not seen, for the very reason that we are searching for something deeper. That there is such an unnoted but rather obvious meaning is patent, as soon as one thinks of it. In the thirty-third canto of the *Inferno*, Poesy is certainly alive, passionately and powerfully alive in the highest degree. In the final canto, however, there is an intentional lowering of the temperature. Poesy seems

benumbed with the chill of Cocytus. Dante cannot, like Milton, make his Satan a lofty and heroic figure. He is no Baudelaire to suffuse the flowers of evil with sickly grace and unwholesome sentiment. It is a picture of unredeemed ugliness, without the dramatic quality and the charm of imagery and allusion that make us fairly hold our breath while witnessing the horrible transformations in *Inferno* xxiv and xxv. Even at the very end of the canto the description of the ascent is studiously plain. Done with Hell and glad to banish it from our minds, we hasten forward to the world of light:

"Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

## II

Of special interest to the student of Dante are the handsome armorial shields of Florence and of her Patrician families. Drawings, in which colors are conventionally indicated by the arrangement of the lines, are here given of the arms of the Cavalcanti and of the Portinari; also of the Gianfigliuzzi, the first of the four coats distinctly described in *Inferno* xvii. Of still greater interest are the two colored plates of the old and the new shield of the Commune of Florence, referred to at the end of *Paradiso* xvi. The old emblem, the lily argent on a shield gules, was retained by the Ghibellines, while the Guelfs in the middle of the century (1251) reversed the colors. These plates serve also as an illustration of the important and sublime passage in *Paradiso* xviii, where we are told how the bird-like spirits formed the mystic constellated Eagle from the M of the word TERRAM. Now the *fleur-de-lis* of Florence might very well have served an ancient manuscript illuminator as a highly ornate initial letter M. Regarding it as such, the reader will easily imagine the

medial point of the letter to be developed, as the Poet describes, into the head and neck of an Eagle. In fact, the resemblance to the heraldic Eagle is striking. The Emblem may also be taken as an illustration of that passage in *Purgatorio* xxiii in which is recorded the quaint fancy that God stamped the word OMO (homo) on the face of man.

Inasmuch as my brief marginal notes pass without comment hundreds of names and allusions about which the reader may be curious, it is my pleasant duty to refer to a few of the abundant helps to the study of the Poet which exist in English. In the way of general criticism it happens that we have two essays worthy of the lofty subject, one by the English Dean, R. W. Church (Macmillan), and one by the American poet-critic, J. R. Lowell (Houghton Mifflin). In the whole wide field of Dante criticism, I have found nothing quite equal in their way to these two essays, which admirably supplement each other. Of the somewhat abundant comment that has recently arisen in connection with the commemorations of the Poet in this anniversary year, the most noteworthy essay that I have chanced to see is that of the eminent Italian thinker, Benedetto Croce, in the *Yale Review* (October, 1921).

Of editions of the Poet, the one published in the series of "Temple Classics" will be found on the whole most useful to the beginner. This contains a translation, facing the text, together with brief notes, useful maps, diagrams, tables, and pictures. The translation of the *Inferno* is the excellent one by John Carlyle. The other translations are less commendable, and the notes are too often wanting in urbanity.

In the way of a prose translation of the complete Poem, there is nothing quite equal to that by Charles Eliot Norton; and a whole library of information is

packed into his terse notes, which are the fruit of life-long study (Houghton Mifflin).

The notes to Longfellow's blank-verse translation are of a different character and are even more interesting. The progress of Dante studies, which has been very great during the past half century, has made many of Longfellow's interpretations obsolete. But as a body of literary parallels, Longfellow's notes should be in the hands of every reader (Houghton Mifflin).

The best edition of the text, with notes and arguments in English, is that by Professor C. H. Grandgent (Heath), who has made scholarly use of the works of the most recent Italian writers and investigators.

Fuller comment is given by H. F. Tozer, whose notes are published separately in three volumes by the Clarendon Press.

In the way of a handbook of historical and biographical information, there is nothing on the whole so good as the compact "Primer of Dante" by E. G. Gardner (Dent). It contains an analytic account of all the Poet's works, together with tables and diagrams and other information of value. Inexpensive and handy, it is the one book which I recommend to the reader as almost indispensable.

Perhaps the most important single book of reference for the student of Dante is the "Dictionary of Proper Names" by Paget Toynbee (Clarendon Press). This work contains some account of every one of the hundreds of persons introduced or referred to in the course of Dante's poems. Mr. Toynbee, who is now the most eminent living English Dante scholar, has had in hand for many years a general Dictionary to the language of Dante,—a work unhappily not yet completed.

It would give me deep pleasure to record here the names of friends who have helped me with advice and sympathy. As I have mentioned Professor Norton, it

would be ungracious not to add that, although believing me to be just another "Childe Roland" at the Dark Tower, he gave me unstinted assistance, as his notes on the manuscript of some of my earlier cantos bear witness. As I think of other and nearer friends, who encouraged my first crude attempts and who are now with Dante and Beatrice, I recall the pathetic words of Goethe:

"Sie hören nicht die folgenden Gesänge,  
Die Seelen, denen ich die ersten sang."

(Those spirits do not hear the present cadence,  
Who kindled to the song that first I sang.)

Of the many friends still happily with us to whom I feel deeply indebted, I cannot forbear to mention here Mr. Edward Howard Griggs, without whose timely and active assistance this translation would certainly not have seen the light of this memorial year.

M. B. A.

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# INFERNO

## I

### PROEM: RESCUE OF DANTE BY VIRGIL

When half the journey of our life was done  
I found me in a darkling wood astray,  
Because aside from the straight pathway run.  
Ah me, how hard a thing it is to say  
What was this thorny wildwood intricate  
Whose memory renews the first dismay!  
Scarcely in death is bitterness more great:  
But as concerns the good discovered there  
The other things I saw will I relate.  
How there I entered I am unaware,  
So was I at that moment full of sleep  
When I abandoned the true thoroughfare.  
But when I reacht the bottom of a steep  
Ending the valley which had overcome  
My courage, piercing me with fear so deep,  
Lifting mine eyes up, I beheld its dome  
Already covered with that planet's light  
Which along all our pathways leads us home.  
Then was a little quieted the fright  
That had been lurking in the heart of me  
Throughout the passage of the piteous night.  
And as the panting castaway, if he  
Escape the wave and on the shore arrive  
Turns back and gazes on the perilous sea,  
Even so my spirit, still a fugitive,  
Turned back to look again upon the shore  
That never left one person yet alive.  
My weary frame somewhat refresht, once more  
Along the solitary slope I plied  
So that the firm foot ever was the lower.

*Time: Morning  
of Good Friday  
of the Jubilee  
year, 1300,  
Dante being  
midway on the  
way to three-  
score and ten.  
Place: the "wan-  
dering wood of  
this life," where  
Dante comes to  
himself from  
that sleep which  
is spiritual  
death*

*Just what sins the three beasts typify is disputed. Elsewhere in the Poem the Wolf is the type of Avarice, by which Dante means all forms of selfish advantage at the expense of others. It is the sin which he most frequently stigmatizes; obviously, therefore, the allegory here cannot be merely personal*

And lo! where but begins the mountainside,  
 A leopard light and very swift of pace  
 And covered with a gayly spotted hide.  
 Never withdrew she from before my face;  
 Nay, rather blockt she so my going on  
 That oft I turned my footing to retrace.  
 It was about the moment of the dawn;  
 Uprose the sun and paled the light benign  
 Of those fair stars which were beside him yon  
 When took they motion first from Love Divine:  
 So the sweet season and the time of day  
 Caused me to augur as a hopeful sign  
 That animal with skin bedappled gay:  
 Yet not so much but that I felt dismayed  
 To see a lion intercept my way.  
 It seemed to me that he toward me made  
 With head erected and with hunger raving,  
 So that the very air appeared afraid:  
 And a she-wolf, made gaunt by every craving  
 Wherewith methought she heavy-laden went,  
 And much folk hitherto of joy bereaving;  
 She brought on me so much discouragement  
 By terror of her aspect that perforce  
 I forfeited all hope of the ascent.  
 And as one, interrupted in his course  
 Of winning, when his fortune is undone  
 Is full of perturbation and remorse,  
 That truceless beast made me such malison,  
 And coming on against me pace by pace  
 Baffled me back where silent is the sun.  
 While I was falling back to that low place,  
 A certain person there appearance made,  
 Whose lengthened silence argued feebleness.  
 When him I saw in the deserted glade,  
 "Have pity upon me!" I imploring cried,  
 "Whate'er thou beest, whether man or shade."

"Not man,—a man once was I," he replied,  
 "My parents both were born at Mantua,  
 And were of Lombard blood on either side.  
*Sub Julio* was I born, though late the day,  
 And under good Augustus lived at Rome  
 When false and lying deities bore sway.  
 I was a poet: that just hero whom  
 Anchises sired, I sang, who came from Troy  
 After the burning of proud Ilium.  
 But why dost thou return to such annoy,  
 Wherefore ascend not the delightful Mount,  
 Beginning and occasion of all joy?"—  
 "Art thou indeed that Virgil, and that fount  
 Whence pours of eloquence so broad a stream?"  
 I made reply to him with bashful front.  
 "O of the other poets light supreme,  
 May the long study well avail me now  
 And the great love that made thy book my theme.  
 Thou art my Master and my Author thou,  
 And thou alone art he from whom results  
 The goodly style whereto my honors owe.  
 Behold the beast that doth my steps repulse:  
 Come to my help against her, famous sage,  
 For palpitates my every vein and pulse."—  
 "Another journey must thy steps engage,"  
 When he beheld me weeping, did he say,  
 "Wouldst from this savage place make pilgrimage;  
 Because this beast whereat thou criest, gives way  
 Never to any comer, but doth sore  
 Impede and harass him until she slay.  
 Malignant is she so that nevermore  
 The craving of her appetite is fed,  
 And after food is hungrier than before.  
 Many are the animals that with her wed,  
 And there shall yet be more, until the Hound  
 Shall come and in her misery strike her dead.

*Dante's choice of Virgil as his guide is a noble instance of that humanity which is above all creeds. The Roman poet is made the type of human reason and he therefore retires, in the Earthly Paradise, in favor of Beatrice who typifies "the good of intellect," i.e. the knowledge of God*

*The Hound is to be a great national deliverer, such as Dante at one time hoped Henry of Luxemburg would be. Here he seems to have in mind Can Grande della Scala, but the reference is purposely vague*

His food shall not be either pelf or ground  
 But what is loving, wise, and valorous:  
 Feltro and Feltro shall his nation bound.  
 That humble Italy preserves he thus  
 For which the maid Camilla bit the dust,  
 Turnus and Nisus and Euryalus.  
 And out of every city shall he thrust  
 That beast, until he drive her back to Hell  
 Whence she was first let loose by envious lust.  
 Wherefore for thee I think and judge it well  
 Thou follow me, and I will bring about  
 Thy passage thither where the eternal dwell.  
 There shalt thou hearken the despairing shout,  
 Shalt see the souls of yore, each woeful guest  
 Who craving for the second death cry out.  
 Shalt see thereafter those who are at rest  
 Amid the flame, because their wishes bend  
 To make them, whensoever, of the blest.  
 If then to these thou wishest to ascend,  
 For this a worthier soul than I shall wait,  
 And with her will I leave thee at the end:  
 Because that Emperor who there holds state,  
 Seeing I was a rebel to His law,  
 Wills that through me none pass His City-gate.  
 There rules His Love, as everywhere His Awe;  
 There in His Capital He sits on high:  
 Happy His chosen who may nigh Him draw."—  
 "O Poet, I entreat of thee," said I,  
 "By that Divinity thou didst not know,  
 So this and greater evil I may fly,  
 That where thou saidst I may a pilgrim go,  
 And led by thee Saint Peter's portal find,  
 And those thou makest out afflicted so."—  
 Then moved he on, I following behind.



II

VIRGIL DESCRIBES THE APPEAL OF BEATRICE

Day was departing and the dusky air  
 Loosing the living things on earth that dwell  
 From their fatigues; and I alone was there  
 Preparing to sustain the war, as well  
 Of the long way as also of the woe,  
 Which now unerring memory will tell.  
 O Muses! O high Genius, aid me now!  
 O Memory who wrote down what I did see,  
 Herein all thy nobility will show.  
 Now I began: "Poet who guidest me,  
 Look to my worth if it be plenteous,  
 Ere to the hard pass thou confidest me.  
 Thou tellest that the Sire of Silvius  
 Went to the everlasting world, while still  
 Corruptible, and in the body thus.  
 But that the Adversary of every ill  
 Should grace him so, viewing the issue high  
 And who he was and what he should fulfill,  
 Seems not unfit to the understanding eye:  
 For he was father of imperial Rome  
 Elected in the empyrean sky,  
 Founding that city and her masterdom  
 In sooth, for see and sanctuary blest  
 Of those who after greatest Peter come.  
 And by that going, which thou honorest,  
 He heard of things whereon were consequent  
 His victory and then the Papal Vest.  
 There afterward the Chosen Vessel went  
 Thence bringing comfort to that Faith supreme  
 Which of salvation is the rudiment.  
 But wherefore I? Who grants me such a dream?  
 Æneas am I not, nor am I Paul,  
 Nor to myself or others worthy seem.

*Time: Evening  
 of Good Friday,  
 1300*

*That the Roman  
 Empire is a fun-  
 damental part of  
 the Divine plan  
 for human re-  
 demption is a  
 principle in  
 Dante's philoso-  
 phy of history,  
 as will be fully  
 developed in  
 Cantos vi and  
 xviii of Paradise*

Whence, if I dare to yield me to thy call,  
     I tremble lest the going prove insane:  
     My words are to the wise,—thou knowest all.”—  
 And like to those who chop and change again  
     On second thoughts, unwilling former will,  
     And make their fair beginning wholly vain,  
 Such became I on that benighted hill:  
     Since, taking thought, I canceled the emprise  
     I was before so eager to fulfill.  
 “If I have comprehended thy replies,”  
     Returned that shadow of the lofty mind,  
     “Thy soul in caitiff apprehension lies,  
 Which oftentimes so baffles humankind,  
     They turn like animal false sight perceiving,  
     Leaving emprise of honor all behind.  
 To free thee from this timid misconceiving,  
     Let me now tell thee what my coming meant,  
     And what I heard of thee that set me grieving.  
 I was with those who are in Limbo pent,  
     When a fair Lady from the blest abode  
     Called me, and her command was my consent.  
 More brilliant than the star her glances glowed;  
     And gently and serenely she began  
     With voice angelic, in her own sweet mode:  
 ‘O courteous shade, soul of the Mantuan  
     Whose fame endures today in human ear,  
     And will endure as long as motion can,  
 One dear to me and not to fortune dear,  
     Is on the desert hillside in his way  
     So hindered that he has turned back for fear,  
 And may, alas! be now so far astray  
     That I am risen for his relief too late,  
     From what I hear the Heavenly voices say.  
 Now go, and with thine eloquence ornate,  
     And what may serve for his escape from woe,  
     Aid him, lest I should be disconsolate.

*Not mere fine  
 phrasing; no  
 one could de-  
 spise it more*

Myself am Beatrice who bid thee go;  
Thence come I whither to return I sigh;  
Love prompted me and makes me urge thee so.  
When I shall be before my Lord on high  
Often will I invoke for thee His grace.'—  
Thereat she paused, and I began reply:  
'O Lady by virtue of whom the human race  
Doth in nobility all things excel  
Within the Heaven that rounds the smallest space,  
To do thy bidding pleases me so well  
The deed were laggard if already done:  
There is no further need thy wish to tell.  
But tell me rather why thou dost not shun  
Descending to this center from the sphere  
So wide, whereto thou burnest to be gone.'—  
'Seeing it is thy will so far to peer,  
I will proceed to tell thee,' she replied,  
'Why I am not afraid to enter here.  
Of those things only fear is justified  
Wherein is power of harming less or much:  
At nothing else need one be terrified.  
By Grace Divine have I been fashioned such  
That pangs me not the misery of you,  
Nor can the flame of all this burning touch.  
In Heaven there is a gentle Lady who  
Berues this barrier whence I bid thee fare,  
So that she bursts on high stern judgment through.  
She summoned Lucy to her in her prayer  
And said: "Thy faithful one now needs thee so  
That I commend him to thy tender care."—  
Lucy, of every cruelty the foe,  
Arose and came where I had not been long  
With Rachel, who was set there long ago.  
"Beatrice," she said, "God's very choral song,  
Why help not him who had such love for thee  
That he forsook for thee the vulgar throng?

*than Dante did. Poetry to him is the perfect utterance of the truth: hence the choice of a poet as the organ of human reason*

*The blessed Virgin Mary whose name, like that of Christ, recurs so often in other parts of the Poem, may not be directly mentioned in Hell. Likewise God is referred to commonly as "Another." Santa Lucia, who reappears, notably in Purg. ix, seems to have*

*been a saint to  
whom Dante was  
especially de-  
voted*

Dost thou not hear him weep in misery?  
 Dost thou not see how he is combated  
 By Death upon a flood wild as the sea?"—  
 None ever in the world so swiftly sped  
 Avoiding hurt or questing benefit,  
 As came I, after suchlike words were said,  
 Speeding me down from where the blessed sit,  
 Trusting thy noble speech whose modest lore  
 Honors thyself, and others hearing it.'—  
 After she this had spoken, she forbore,  
 And, weeping, turned her shining eyes away,  
 Wherefore to come she made me hasten more;  
 And, coming to thee even as she did pray,  
 I drew thee from that beast which up the fair  
 Mountain, bereft thee of the briefer way.  
 What ails thee then? ah, why, why tarry there?  
 Why harbor in thy heart such cowardice?  
 Why not take liberty to do and dare,  
 When cherish for thee so much care as this  
 In Court of Heaven three Ladies benedight,  
 And mine own speaking pledges thee such bliss?"—  
 Even as the flowerets by the chill of night  
 Bended and closed, when brightens them the sun  
 Uplift both stem and petal to the light,  
 So with my drooping courage I had done  
 Already, and began like one set free,  
 So much good daring to my heart had run:  
 "O deep compassion of her who succored me!  
 And courteous thou, promptly obedient  
 To the true words that she addressed to thee!  
 Thy words have with such ardent longing bent  
 My heart to the adventure that, in troth,  
 I have returned now to my first intent.  
 Now go, for one will animates us both:  
 Thou leader and thou lord and master mild!"—  
 So said I; and he moving, nothing loath  
 I entered on the pathway deep and wild.

## III

## THE DIRE INSCRIPTION AND THE DARK RIVER

"Through me the way is to the city of woe;  
Through me the way unto eternal pain;  
Through me the way among the lost below.  
Justice commoved my high Creator, when  
Made me Divine Omnipotence, combined  
With Primal Love and Wisdom Sovereign.  
Before me nothing was of any kind  
Except eterne, and I eterne abide:  
Leave, ye that enter in, all hope behind!"  
On high above a gateway I descried,  
Written in dusky color, this device:  
Whence I: "The sense is dire to me, O Guide!"  
Then answered he, as of expert advice:  
"Here must thou every fear perforce neglect,  
Here must perforce be killed all cowardice.  
Now come we where I taught thee to expect  
To look upon the woeful populace  
Who have forgone the good of intellect."  
Laying his hand on mine with cheerful face,  
Whence I was comforted, he made me keep  
Right on and inward to the secret place.  
Here lamentations, sighs, and wailings deep  
Resounding, so the starless welkin fill  
That, at the first, I could not choose but weep.  
Strange languages, discoursings horrible,  
Accents of anger, histories of woes,  
Smiting of hands, with voices hoarse and shrill,  
Make a tumultuous roar that swirling goes  
Forever in that air of endless night,  
Like to the sandblast when the whirlwind blows.  
And I, my temples girded with affright,  
Said: "Master, what is this, and who may be  
The folk who seem in such a woeful plight?"

"The melancholy souls," then answered he,  
 "Of those enduring this condition dire,  
 Lived void of honor and of infamy.  
 They are commingled with that caitiff quire  
 Of angels, who nowise rebellious were,  
 Nor leal to God, but all for self-desire.  
 The Heavens to keep their beauty from impair,  
 Banned them, nor harbors them the deep of Hell,  
 Because the damned some boast of them would  
 bear."  
 "Master," said I, "what grievance is so fell  
 To these, that their lament should be so great?"  
 He answered: "I will very briefly tell.  
 These have no hope of death; and this their state  
 Of blind existence is degraded so,  
 They are envious of every other fate.  
 Report of them the world does not allow;  
 Mercy and Justice hold them in disdain:  
 Let us not speak of them, but look, and go."  
 And I beheld, on looking there again,  
 A whirling banner running swiftly on,  
 As scorning all delay; and such a train  
 Of people in pursuit of it that run,  
 Nothing but seeing could belief persuade  
 That ever Death so many had fordone.  
 And recognizing some, I saw a shade  
 In whom detected I that one of these  
 Who cravenly the Great Refusal made.  
 This was the sect of caitiffs, who displease,—  
 As now forthwith I understood and knew,—  
 Not God alone but all His enemies.  
 Wretches who never were alive, and who  
 Were sorely stung upon their bodies nude  
 By hornets and by wasps that thither flew.  
 These caused their visages to stream with blood,  
 Which, mixed with tears, was gathered at their feet  
 By vermin, foul and loathsome multitude.

*The Great Refusal was made in 1294 by Pope Celestine V, whose abdication was probably managed by his immediate successor, Boniface VIII, a chief object throughout the Poem of scorn and denunciation*

And now my glances, pushing further, meet  
People upon the marge of a great stream;  
Whence I: "Now tell me, Master, I entreat,  
What folk are these, and by what rule they seem  
So eager on the passage to be gone,  
As I distinguish by the feeble gleam."

And he to me: "These matters shall be known  
Unto thee, when we stay from our advance  
Upon the woeful marge of Acheron."

Thereon with downcast eyes and modest glance,  
Fearing my words were irksome to him, I  
Far as the stream refrained from utterance.

And lo! upon a bark approaching nigh,  
One white with ancient tresses, passing old:

— "Woe to you wicked spirits!" was his cry.

"Hope nevermore the Heavens to behold:  
I come to lead you to the other bank,  
Into eternal darkness, heat, and cold.

And thou, O living spirit, from the rank  
Dispart thee, of these others who are dead."

And when he saw me not as one who shrank:

"Another way, by other ports," he said,  
"Not here, shalt come for ferriage to the shore:  
Upon a lighter keel must thou be sped."

"Vex thee not, Charon," said my Monitor:  
"Thus it is willed where will is one and same  
With potence to fulfill,—and ask no more."

Then quieted the shaggy cheeks became,  
Of him, the boatman of the marish dark,  
Who round about his eyes had wheels of flame.

But all those spirits, so forworn and stark,  
Change color and their teeth are chattering,  
As soon as they the cruel accents mark.

God they blaspheme and their own sires, and fling  
Curses on race and place and time and law  
Both of their birth and their engendering.

Then, flocking all together, they withdraw,  
Bitterly weeping, to the cursed shore  
Awaiting each who holds not God in awe.

Charon, the demon, with the eyes that glow'r,  
Beckoning to them, every one receives,  
And smites whoever lingers, with the oar.

As in the autumn season when the leaves,  
First one and then another, lightly fall,  
Till all upon the ground the bough perceives:

Likewise the evil seed of Adam all  
Fling them from off that margin one by one  
At signals, like the bird at his recall.

Thus over the dusk water they are gone,  
And ere they can alight on yonder strand  
Forgathers a fresh throng on this anon.

"Son," said the courteous Master, "understand  
That those who perish subject to God's ire  
Are all assembled here from every land,

And ready are to pass the river dire,  
Because Celestial Justice so doth goad  
That very fear converts into desire.

No righteous spirit ever takes this road:  
And hence, though Charon may of thee complain,  
Thou knowest now the meaning of his mode."—

When he had ended, all the dreary plain  
So trembled that, but calling it to mind,  
The terror bathes me now with sweat again.

The land of tears gave forth a blast of wind  
With lightning flashes of vermilion deep,  
Whence consciousness I utterly resigned:

Then sank I like one overcome with sleep.



IV

FIRST CIRCLE: LIMBO; THE VIRTUOUS PAGANS

A pealing burst of thunder loosed my sense  
From chains of heavy sleep, and made me bound  
Like one who is awakt by violence:  
And, risen erect, on every side around  
I moved my rested eye, and fixed my sight  
To recognize the features of that ground.  
True is it that I stood upon the height  
Above the valley of the Abyss of Woe,  
Which gathers roar of wailing infinite.  
It was so dark, deep, cloudy, that although  
My gaze upon the bottom I confined,  
Not anything discerned I there below.  
"Now go we down among the people blind,"  
Began the Poet, pallid as the dead:  
"I will go first, and follow thou behind."  
And I, observant of his pallor, said:  
"How shall I come if thou afraid appear,  
By whom I am wonted to be comforted?"  
"The anguish of the people downward here,  
Portrays upon my face," said he at this,  
"That pity which thou deemest to be fear.  
The long way urges: come, be not remiss."  
Thus he set forth, and made me enter thus,  
The foremost circle that begirds the abyss.  
Here was no sound perceptible to us  
Of wailing, only sighs and sighs again,  
That made the eternal air all tremulous:  
And this arose from woe unpanged with pain,  
Felt by the great and thronging multitude  
Of children and of women and of men.  
"Askest thou not," resumed the Master good,  
"What spirits these may be thou dost behold?  
Now ere thou go, I wish it understood

Though these sinned not, their merit manifold  
Doth not, for want of Baptism, signify,—  
The portal of the faith which thou dost hold.  
They worshipt God but through idolatry,  
Seeing they were to Christian ages prior:  
And among such as these myself am I.  
For such defects, and for no trespass dire,  
Lost are we, suffering no more but so,  
That without hope we languish in desire.”  
On hearing this, laid hold on me great woe,  
For very worthy people knew I well,  
Suspended in that Limbo there below.  
“O tell me, Lord, O Master, speak and tell,”  
Began I, wishing full intelligence  
About the faith that doth all error quell,  
“Went ever any by self-merit hence,  
Or by another’s, to a blissful fate?”  
And he, who understood my covert sense,  
Made answer: “I was new unto this state,  
When I beheld One come omnipotent,  
With sign of victory incoronate.  
The shade of our first father penitent,  
Abel his son and Noah, hence He drew;  
Moses the lawgiver obedient;  
Patriarch Abraham, King David too;  
Israel with his sire, with every son,  
With Rachel for whose sake such pains he knew,  
And many more, and gave them benison:  
And thou must know that earlier than these,  
Never a human soul salvation won.”  
Not for his speaking, did our going cease,  
But ever through the forest did we fare,—  
The forest, I mean, where spirits were the trees.  
We had not traveled far as yet from where  
My sleep befell, when I beheld a blaze  
Which conquered from the dark a hemisphere.

We still were distant by a little space,  
Yet not so far but I discerned in part  
That honorable people held that place.  
"O thou who honorest both science and art,  
Who may these be that so great honor claim,  
Thus set from fashion of the rest apart?"  
And he to me: "The honorable fame  
Concerning them that in thy life doth ring,  
Wins grace in Heaven that so advances them."  
Hereon I heard a voice thus heralding:  
"Honor to him of poets loftiest!  
His shade returneth home from wandering."  
After the voice had ceast and was at rest,  
Four mighty shades advancing did I see,  
In whom nor grief nor joy was manifest.  
The Master good began to say to me:  
"Mark him there, carrying that sword in hand,  
Who, as their lord, comes on before the three:  
'Tis Homer, sovran bard of every land,  
Horace next after him, satiric wit,  
Third Ovid, Lucan last of all the band.  
Since unto each doth, as to me, befit  
The name the one voice sounded, in such wise  
They do me honor, and do well in it."  
Thus gathered the fair school before mine eyes,  
Of him, the lord of song the loftiest,  
Who o'er the others like an eagle flies.  
When they had talkt awhile with him, the rest  
To me with signs of salutation bent;  
Whereat my Master's smile his mind exprest.  
They paid me honor far more eminent,  
In that they made me of their brotherhood:  
So I was sixth of them, the sapient.  
Toward the light we thus our way pursued,  
Discoursing things whereof fits reticence,  
Even as there to speak of them was good.

*The gates of the Castle, conceived as a magnificent University, typify the seven liberal arts of the Trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music). These formed the regular curriculum of the schools, as being the avenues to all human knowledge*

We gained a castle's grand circumference,  
 With seven lofty walls encircled round,  
 Bemoated with a brooklet for defense.  
 This passed we over as upon dry ground:  
 Through seven gates I with those sages went;  
 A meadow of fresh verdure there we found.  
 People were there of aspect eminent,  
 With eyes that moved majestic and slow:  
 Taciturn, but with voices sweetly blent.  
 A little to one side withdrew we so,  
 Into an open place, and high and sheen,  
 Where one and all we might behold and know.  
 There opposite, upon the enameled green,  
 Were shown to me the mighty souls, whom I  
 Feel inwardly exalted to have seen.  
 I saw Electra with much people by,  
 Hector among them, and Æneas descried,  
 And armored Cæsar with the falcon eye.  
 Camill', Penthesiléa, I espied;  
 Over against them King Latinus dwelled,  
 Lavinia, his daughter, by his side.  
 I saw that Brutus Tarquin who expelled;  
 Lucrece, Cornelia, Julia, Marcia; then  
 Alone, apart, great Saladin beheld.  
 And when I lifted up my brows again,  
 The Master I beheld of those who know,  
 Sitting amid the philosophic train.  
 All look to him, to him all honor show:  
 Here saw I Plato, Socrates advance,  
 Who nearer him before the others go;  
 Democritus, who puts the world on chance,  
 Anaxagoras and Diogenes I saw;  
 Dioscorides, collector good of plants;  
 Thales, and Zeno of the Stoic law;  
 Orpheus, Heraclitus, Empedocles,  
 Tully, and Linus, and moral Seneca;

Euclid, geometer; Hippocrates,  
Ptolemy, Avicen, Galen; him who wrought  
The Commentary great, Averroës.  
In full concerning all report I not,  
For the long theme impels me forward: thus  
Many a time the word comes short of thought.  
The band of six gives place to two of us:  
My sage Guide leads me by another way  
Forth from the still air to the tremulous;  
And now I come where shines no light of day.

.

## V

## SECOND CIRCLE: FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

From the first circle thus I made descent  
Down to the second, whose contracted rim  
Girdles so much more woe it goads lament.  
There Minos stands and snarls with clamor grim,  
Examines the transgressions at the gate,  
Judges, and sends as he encircles him.  
Yea, when the spirit born to evil fate  
Before him comes confessing all, that fell  
Distinguisher among the reprobate,  
Seeing what place belongs to it in Hell,  
Entwines him with his tail such times as show  
How many circles down he bids it dwell.  
Always before him many wait; they go  
All turn by turn to sentence for their sin:  
They tell and hear and then are whirled below.  
"O thou that comest to the woeful inn!"  
As soon as he beheld me, Minos cried,  
Leaving the act of so great discipline,  
"Beware to enter, beware in whom confide,  
Be not deceived by wideness of the door."—  
"Why dost thou also clamor?" said my Guide,  
"Bar not his going fated from before:  
Thus it is willed up yonder where is might  
To bring the will to pass, and ask no more."—  
And now the notes of woe begin to smite  
The hollow of mine ear; now am I come  
Where I am pierced by wailings infinite.  
I came into a place of all light dumb,  
Which bellows like a sea where thunders roll  
And counter-winds contend for masterdom.  
The infernal hurricane beyond control  
Sweeps on and on with ravishment malign  
Whirling and buffeting each hapless soul.

When by the headlong tempest hurled supine,  
Here are the shrieks, the moaning, the laments,  
Here they blaspheme the puissance divine.  
I learned that to such sorry recompense  
Are damned the sinners of the carnal sting,  
Who make the reason thrall to appetite.  
And as great flocks of starlings on the wing  
In winter time together trooping go,  
So did that blast the wicked spirits fling  
Now here, now there, now up, and now below:  
Comfort of hope to them is never known  
Either of rest or even less bitter woe.  
And as the pilgrim cranes from zone to zone  
Draw out their aery file and chant the dirge,  
So saw I, and I heard them making moan,  
Shadows who on that storm-blast whirl and surge:  
Whence I: "Who, Master, are those tempest-flung,  
Round whom the black air whistles like a  
scourge?"—  
"The first," said he, "that multitude among,  
Of whom thou seekest knowledge more precise,  
Was empress over many a tribe and tongue.  
Abandoned so was she to wanton vice  
That, her own stigma so to wipe away,  
Lust was made licit by her law device.  
That is Semiramis,—as annals say  
Consort of Ninus and successor too;  
Where governs now the Soldan, she held sway.  
The next one, lo! herself for love she slew  
And to Sichæus' urn her faith dismissed;  
Next wanton Cleopatra comes to view;  
Now lookest thou on Helen, whose acquit  
Brought evil years; and great Achilles see  
Who found in Love his last antagonist.  
Look, Paris, Tristan . . ." and he pointed me  
A thousand shades, and named me every name,  
Who in our life gave Love the victory.

When I had heard my Teacher many a dame  
 Of eld enumerate, and many a knight,  
 Pity assailed me and almost overcame.  
 "Poet," began I, "fain would I invite  
 Speech with those twain who go a single way  
 And seem upon the wind to be so light."—  
 And he made answer: "Thou shalt mark when they  
 Draw near to us, and then adjure them by  
 The Love that leads them, and they will obey."—  
 Thereafter when a whirlwind swept them nigh  
 I lifted up my voice: "O souls forspent,  
 Come and have speech with us if none deny."—  
 As doves to the heart's call obedient  
 Are borne along to the belovèd nest  
 On wide and steady pinions homeward bent,  
 So these came tow'rd us through the air unblest,  
 Veering from Dido and her multitude,  
 So tender and so strong was my request.  
 "O living creature full of grace and good  
 Who goest through the dusk air visiting  
 Us who left earth encrimsoned with our blood,  
 If friendly were the Universal King  
 We would be praying to Him for thy peace,  
 Seeing thou pitiest our suffering.  
 Whatever ye to speak and hear may please,  
 That will we speak and hear you close at hand,  
 If yet awhile the wind as now may cease.  
 The town where I was born sits on the strand  
 Beside the water where descends the Po  
 In quest of peace, with his companion band.  
 Love that in gentle heart is soon aglow  
 Laid hold on this one for the person fair  
 Bereft me, and the mode is still my woe.  
 Love that doth none beloved from loving spare,  
 To do him pleasure made my heart so fain  
 That, as thou seest, not yet doth it forbear.

*Ravenna, where  
 Dante spent his  
 latter years in  
 the service or  
 under the pro-  
 tection of its  
 lord, Guido  
 Novello da Po-  
 lenta, a nephew  
 of Francesca.  
 The mode of her  
 death is so  
 grievous to her  
 because it de-  
 prived her of a  
 chance to repent*



Love led us down to death together: Cain  
Awaits the soul of him who laid us dead."—  
These words from them to us returned again.  
Hearing those injured souls, I bowed my head  
And held it for so long dejectedly  
That, "Whereon thinkest thou?" the Poet said.  
When I could answer, I began: "Ah me,  
How many tender thoughts, what longing drew  
These lovers to the pass of agony."—  
Thereafter I turned to them, and spoke anew:  
"Francesca, all thy torments dim mine eyes  
With tears that flow for sympathy and rue.  
But tell me, in the time of the sweet sighs  
By what, and how did Love to you disclose  
The vague desires, that ye should realize?"—  
And she to me: "It is the woe of woes  
Remembrance of the happy time to keep  
In misery,—and that thy Teacher knows.  
But if thy yearning be indeed so deep  
To know the first root of a love so dear,  
I will do even as they who speak and weep.  
One day together read we for good cheer  
Of Love, how he laid hold on Launcelot:  
Alone we were and without any fear.  
Many and many a time that reading brought  
Our eyes to meet, and blancht our faces o'er,  
But only one point we resisted not.  
When reading of the smile long-awaited-for  
Being kissed by such a lover chivalrous,  
He, never now from me divided more,  
Kissed me upon the mouth, all tremulous. . .  
Gallehaut was the book and writer too:  
That day there was no reading more for us."—  
And while one soul was saying this, for rue  
So wept the other, that I fainted all  
For pity, even as dying persons do,  
And fell, as would a lifeless body fall.

## VI

## THIRD CIRCLE: THE INTEMPERATE

On coming to my senses, closed at sight  
    Deplorable of them, the kindred twain,  
    Pity for whom had overwhelmed me quite,  
New souls in torment and new modes of pain  
    Wherever I am moving I behold,  
    Wherever I turn and look about again.  
In the Third Circle am I, where the cold  
    Eternal cursed heavy rain doth flow,  
    In mode and measure ever as of old.  
Thick hail and turbid water-drops and snow  
    Down through the darkling air forever fall;  
    Foul stench receives them on the ground below.  
Cerberus, fierce and monstrous animal,  
    With triple gullet barks in currish wise  
    Above the people here submerged withal.  
Greasy and black his beard, and red his eyes,  
    And belly big, and fingers clawed amain:  
    Clutching the spirits, he doth rend and slice.  
Howling like dogs by reason of the rain,  
    They shelter one side with the other,—thus  
    Turn back and forth the reprobates profane.  
The open-mouthed great dragon Cerberus  
    Displayed his fangs, what time he us descried:  
    No limb had he that was not tremulous.  
And, spreading palms and fingers out, my Guide  
    Took earth up and, full-fisted, flung it right  
    Into those gullets ravenous and wide.  
As dog that barks for craving appetite  
    Grows quiet setting tooth upon his food,  
    For but to gorge it doth he tug and fight,  
So quiet grew those faces, filth-imbrued,  
    Of Demon Cerberus, who bellows so  
    The spirits would be deaf if they but could.

We passed above the shadows whom below  
The heavy rain is beating, treading down  
What seems a body, but is empty show.  
Prone on the bottom lay they every one,  
Except that sudden sat erect one shade  
As soon as it perceived us passing on.  
"O thou who through this Hell art led," it prayed,  
"Recall me, if thou canst, to memory:  
Or ever I was unmade, wast thou made."  
"Perchance," said I, "the anguish thou dost dree,  
Doth from my memory thy form efface  
So that, it seems, I never looked on thee.  
But tell me who thou art, that in a place  
So woeful liest, punished in such plight  
That none, though greater, were so much disgrace."  
"Thy city," he returned, "distended quite  
With envy till the sack no more can hold,  
Held me as hers, when life to me was bright.  
Ciacco, ye citizens called me of old:  
For the pernicious guilt of gluttony  
The rain subdues me, as thou dost behold.  
And, wretched spirit, not alone am I,  
Since for like guilt these suffer, all and some,  
Like punishment:" no more he made reply.  
"Ciacco," I answered him, "thy martyrdom  
Doth weigh me down to tears compassionate:  
But tell me, if thou knowest, to what will come  
The citizens of the divided state?  
If any one therein be just? and whence  
Such mighty discord makes it desolate?"  
And he to me: "After long turbulence  
There will be bloodshed, and the rustics, they  
Will drive the others forth, with much offense.  
Thereafter it behooves them fall away  
Within three suns, and the others rise again  
Thanks to a certain one who trims today.

*This prophecy refers to incidents in the bitter, fluctuating, dramatic struggle for mastery in Florence between the aristocratic Black Guefts, captained by Corso Donati, and the Whites, led by the Cerchi,—whose rustic origin is so often referred to as to convince us that they retained some of the faults of breeding that stamp in all ages the newly rich.—The trimmer is Pope Boniface. Who the two just men are is matter of conjecture. We shall meet all but one of the celebrities referred to by name*

Long while shall they a lofty front maintain,  
 Keeping the former, spite of tears and shame,  
 'Neath heavy fardels bended down amain.

The just are two, but none gives heed to them:  
 Envy and avarice and arrogance  
 Are triple sparks that set all hearts aflame."

Here ended he the sad deliverance.

And I: "Pray thee, instruct me further forth,—  
 I crave the guerdon of more utterance.

Of Tegghiaio and Farinata, men of worth,  
 Of Rusticucci, Arrigo, Mosca, tell,  
 And of the others who brought good to birth,

Where are they,—cause that I may know them well:  
 For great desire constrains me to descry  
 If Heaven may soothe them, or envenom Hell."

"They are among the souls of blackest dye,  
 Whom sins diverse down to the bottom weigh:  
 Thou mayst behold them, going down where they lie.

But when thou art in the sweet world, I pray  
 That thou wilt bring me back to human mind:  
 No more I answer thee, no more I say."

His straight eyes thereupon aslant inclined,  
 Awhile he scanned me; then did headlong fall  
 Down to the level of the other blind.

"No more," my Leader said, "he waken shall  
 This side of the angelic trumpet sound.  
 When shall arrive the judge inimical

Each one shall in his dismal tomb be found,  
 His flesh and outward figure reassume,  
 And hear what shall eternally resound."

So fared we onward through that filthy scum  
 Of shadows and of sleet, with footing slow,  
 Touching a little on the life to come.

Wherefore I questioned: "Master, will this woe  
 After the mighty Judgment grow amain,  
 Or less become, or burning be just so?"

"Turn to thy science," answered he again,  
    "Which holds, the more complete the thing, the more  
    It feels of pleasure, and the like of pain.  
Though these accursèd people nevermore  
    Reach true perfection, after that event  
    They look to be completer than before."  
A circling course along that road we went,  
    Speaking far more than may repeated be;  
    Then came we to the point of the descent,  
And here found Plutus the arch-enemy.

## VII

FOURTH CIRCLE: THE PARSIMONIOUS AND THE  
PRODIGAL

"Papé Satan Papé Satan aleppè!"

Thus Plutus' clucking voice beginning went;

And that benignant Sage, experienced

In all things, said for my encouragement:

"Fear not, for any war that he may wage

Shall not prohibit thee the rock's descent."

Then to that bloated visage turned my Sage,

And said: "Accursed wolf, be not so loud!

And be thou gnawed within by thine own rage.

Not without cause this going is allowed:

Thus it is willed above where Michaël

Wrought vengeance for the deed of whoredom  
proud."—

As ocean-faring sails, which the winds swell,

Would fall entangled should the mainmast crack,

So to the ground the cruel monster fell.

Descending into the Fourth Gap, we track

Still farther that declivity of woe

Which doth our universal guilt ensack.

Justice Divine! can any there below

Heap up such penalties and travail new?

And why does guilt of ours consume us so?

As on Charybdis yonder surges do,

Each against other shattering its crest,

So here the folk their counter-dance pursue.

Here saw I people more than all the rest

Who from each quarter, with a howling din,

Were trundling burdens by main force of breast.

They clash together, and then both begin

The counter-movement, rolling back again,

Shouting: "Why throw away?" and "Why hold  
in?"—

So on both sides they circle to regain  
The point opposed, along the dismal mew,  
Still shouting their opprobrious refrain:  
Then as along his semicircle drew  
Each one to the other joust, he wheeled withal.  
And I, who felt my heart as stricken through,  
Said: "Master mine, now tell me, who may all  
These people be? and on our left-hand side  
These shaven crowns,—were they all clerical?"—  
"All these were in the first life," he replied,  
"Of mind so squinting that the middle route  
Of measured spending could not be espied.  
With voice exceeding clear they bark this out,  
When to the two points of the circle come,  
Where counter-crime compels them turn about.  
These heads bereft of hair were, all and some,  
Priests, popes, and cardinals, whose practices  
Show avarice in sovereign masterdom."  
Then said I: "Master, among such as these  
There surely must be some I ought to know,  
Who were defiled with these iniquities."  
And he to me: "Vain thoughts combinest thou:  
The purblind life that made them sordid there  
Bedims them to all recognition now.  
To the two buttings will they ever fare;  
Out of the sepulcher will these arise  
Close-fisted, even as those with scissored hair.  
Ill-giving and keeping ill have Paradise  
Bereft them, and in such a scuffle joined:  
No beauteous phrase to grace it I devise.  
How transient is the farce, here mayst thou find,  
Of goods committed unto Fortune, son,  
Whence buffet one another humankind.  
For all the gold the moon looks down upon,  
Or that did ever in the world exist,  
Could of these weary souls give rest to none."

*Cropt hair is a symbol of lavishness. "He has spent his whole substance, even to the hair of his head" (Italian saying)*

*Fortune, regarded as an angelic intelligence whose function it is to bring down the mighty and exalt those of low estate*

"Master, now tell me more," did I insist:  
 "This Fortune whereunto thou dost allude,  
 What is she, with the world's wealth in her fist?"  
 And he to me: "O foolish human brood,  
 What ignorance is this wherein ye pine!  
 Now let my judgment of her be thy food:—  
 He whose transcendent wisdom is divine,  
 Fashioned the skies, and gave them those who  
     guide  
 That every part to every part may shine,  
 So equally do they the light divide;  
 Likewise for earthly grandeur did ordain  
 A common regent, who, as times betide,  
 Might work vicissitude of treasures vain,  
 That they from people and from kindred pass,  
 Beyond all human prudence to restrain.  
 Whence rules one race, another cries 'Alas!'  
 Obeying her decree, the circumstance  
 Whereof is hidden, like the snake in grass.  
 Your wisdom can no counterstand advance:  
 She looks beforehand, judges, and pursues,  
 As do the other gods, her governance.  
 Her permutations have not any truce:  
 Necessity makes her precipitate,  
 With frequent turns of luck at fast and loose.  
 Such is that one against whom people prate  
 Who rather ought to praise her, doing amiss  
 To deal in blame and to vituperate.  
 But she is blest and takes no heed of this:  
 With other primal creatures jocundly  
 She rolls her wheel, rejoicing in her bliss.  
 Now go we down to deeper misery:  
 Already sinks each star that made ascent  
 When I set forth,—no loitering may be."  
 Across the circle to the bound we went,  
 Above a bubbling fountain that careered  
 Down through a gully where it found a vent.



The water far more dark than perse appeared:  
And as the dusky waves companioned us,  
We entered downward by a pathway weird.  
A marish, Styx by name, this dolorous  
Rivulet fosters when its waters flow  
To foot of the gray slope precipitous.  
And standing there intently gazing, lo!  
I saw a folk bemired upon that fen,  
All of them naked, and with look of woe.  
Each smote his fellow with the hand, and then  
With both the feet and with the chest and head,  
Rending with teeth and rending once again.  
“Now seest thou, son,” the kindly Master said,  
“The souls of those whom Wrath did overquell:  
And I would also have it credited  
That underneath the water people dwell  
Who sigh, and make it bubble at the brim,  
As wheresoe’er it turn, thine eye may tell.  
Fixt in the ooze, they murmur forth this hymn:  
‘Sweet sun-rejoicing air did we respire  
Sullenly, drowned in sluggish vapors grim:  
Now lie we sullen here in the black mire.’  
They gurgle in their gullets this refrain,  
Because they cannot speak with words entire.”  
Thus, in wide compass round the filthy fen,  
Between the dry bank and the bog we passed,  
Scanning the guzzlers of the puddle: then  
We reacht the bottom of a tower at last.

*The Wrathful  
and the Sullen*

## VIII

## FIFTH CIRCLE: THE WRATHFUL

Long while before (I say continuing)  
     We reacht the bottom of that tower so high,  
     Our gaze upon its top was lingering  
 By reason of two lights we could descry;  
     And other signal gleamed far opposite,  
     So far away it hardly caught the eye.  
 Turned to that Sea of Wisdom infinite,  
     I said: "What means this? what may answered be  
     By yonder beacon? and who kindled it?"  
 "The thing we await thou mayst already see  
     Over the turbid waves," he answered, "so  
     The marish-vapor hide it not from thee."  
 Cord never shot an arrow from the bow  
     That ran so swift a course athwart the air,  
     As o'er the water at that moment, lo!  
 I saw a little bark toward us fare,  
     Under a single boatman's pilotage,  
     Who shouted: "Now, fell spirit, art thou there?"  
 'Phlegyas, Phlegyas," replied to him my Sage,  
     "This time thou shoutest vainly: it is meet  
     Thou have us but to pass the ferriage."  
 As one who listens to some foul deceit  
     That has been done him, and resents it sore,  
     Such became Phlegyas in his gathered heat.  
 Embarking thereupon my Monitor  
     Caused me to take my station at his side,—  
     And only then the boat seemed laden more.  
 When I was in the wherry with my Guide,  
     The ancient prow upon the passage sped,  
     More than with others furrowing the tide.  
 While we were running through the channel dead,  
     Arose before me one whom mud did steep:  
     "Who art thou, coming ere thy time?" he said.

*Filippo Argenti,  
 of the great  
 house of the  
 Adimari, a*

And I: "Though come, I stay not in the deep:  
But who art thou who art grown filthy so?"  
And he: "Thou seest that I am one who weep."  
Then I to him: "With weeping and with woe  
Accursed spirit, tarry here for aye:  
For thee, all filthy as thou art, I know."—  
Then stretcht he forth both hands, the boat to stay: °  
But him my wary Master from us pressed,  
Crying: "Away, with the other dogs, away!"  
Then said: "Indignant soul!" as he caressed  
My bosom with embrace, my cheek with kiss,  
"Blessed be she that bore thee 'neath her breast!  
A person arrogant on earth was this;  
His memory is graced with nothing kind:  
So likewise here his shade in fury is.  
Up there how many who are in their mind  
Great kings, shall wallow here in mire like swine,  
Leaving a horrible report behind."  
"Much should I like," said I, "O Master mine,  
To see him in this hellbroth dipt and dyed,  
Before we issue from the marsh malign."  
And he to me: "Thou shalt be satisfied  
Ere comes the shore to view; it is not fit  
That such desire of thine should be denied."  
Short while thereafter I beheld him smit  
By that bespattered folk with stroke so fell  
That still I praise and thank my God for it.  
"At Philip Argenti! at him!" all did yell:  
That spirit Florentine exasperate  
Turned on his very self with tooth and nail.  
We left him there, nor more do I narrate:  
But lamentation smote mine ears upon,  
Whence I look forward with mine eyes dilate.  
And the good Master said: "Now, O my son,  
The city named of Dis is nigh at hand,  
With heavy citizens, great garrison."

*swaggering, insolent noble who  
shod his horse  
with silver*

*The reference to the mosques in the Capital of the Infernal Empire is in harmony with the elaborate poetical parallelism between Heaven and Hell, the things of God and those of Lucifer, which is one of the features of Dante's art. To the mind of the medieval Christian the mosque is the temple of a wicked heresy. Thus Hell has "cloisters"; the members of the "college" of the hypocrites wear "cowls"; Dante goes so far as to parody one of the Latin hymns of the Church to emphasize the contrast between Christ and Satan (beginning of Canto xxxiv)*

And I: "Already in the valley stand  
 Its mosques, O Master, and to me they show  
 Vermilion, as if issuing from the brand."  
 And he made answer: "The eternal glow  
 Of inward flame kindles that ruddy glare,  
 As thou perceivest in this Hell below."  
 Then came we into the deep fosses, where  
 They compass round that town disconsolate:  
 The walls appeared to me of iron there.  
 Not without making first a circuit great,  
 We came unto a place where loudly cried  
 The boatman: "Get ye out, here is the gate."  
 I saw above the portals and beside,  
 Thousands rained down from Heaven, who wrath-  
 ful said:  
 "Who is this man that, never having died,  
 Is going through the kingdom of the dead?"  
 And my sage Master signaled he would fain  
 Talk with them privately.—Thus they were led  
 A little to abate their great disdain,  
 And cried: "Come thou alone; let him go back  
 Who has made bold to enter this domain.  
 Alone shall he retrace his reckless track:  
 Let him attempt it; for thou here shalt stay  
 Who hast revealed to him a land so black."  
 Imagine, Reader, what was my dismay  
 At hearing that accursèd language: for  
 I felt that I could never find the way.  
 "O my belovèd Leader, thou who more  
 Than seven times hast made me safe, and hast  
 Rescued from peril deep," did I implore,  
 "Do not forsake me thus undone at last;  
 And if the going farther be denied,  
 Let us retrace our steps together fast."  
 And that Lord who had thither been my Guide,  
 Answered: "Fear nothing, for the way we go  
 By Such is given, none turneth us aside.

Wait here, and let thy soul, forwearied so,  
     Be fed with better hope and comforted:  
     I will not leave thee in the world below."  
 And thus the gentle Father forth is sped,  
     There leaving me who in conjecture dwell;  
     For Yes and No contend within my head.  
 What he proposed to them I could not tell;  
     But long he had not tarried with them, when  
     Back inwards all went scurrying pell-mell.  
 The gates they shut, those enemies of men,  
     On my Lord's bosom, who, excluded thence,  
     With tardy steps returned to me again.  
 His eyes were on the ground, of confidence  
     His forehead shorn, and amid sighs he spake:  
     "Who has denied me the grim tenements?"  
 And then to me: "What though my wrath awake,  
     Be not dismayed, for I shall find the way,  
     Whatever obstacle within they make.  
 This insolence is nothing new, for they  
     Displayed it at less hidden gate of yore,  
     Which stands unbolted to this very day.  
 Thou sawest the deadly writ above the door;  
     And now descends the steep upon this side,  
     Passing without a guide the circles o'er,  
 One who shall fling the city open wide."

*Virgil's repulse here seems to shadow forth a spiritual crisis so terrible that the noblest human reason is unavailing. There are dreadful gates where the wisest can only cast his eyes to the ground. In the middle of the next Canto the Poet emphasizes the importance of the allegory in this crucial passage*

## IX

## SIXTH CIRCLE: THE FURIES AND THE ANGEL

The cowardice that blancht my outward hue  
On seeing my Conductor back repair,  
The sooner checkt in him his color new.  
As listening, he stopt attentive there,  
Because the vision not far forth could roam  
Through the thick murk and through the darkling  
air.  
“Yet we must gain perforce the masterdom,”  
Began he: “Nay but . . . so great help was sent . . .  
Oh, long it seems until that Other come!”—  
I plainly saw how what at first he meant,  
He sought with after thoughts to cancel through  
In phrases from the former different.  
But still his language roused my fear anew,  
For in the broken phrase I traced a scope  
Perchance more harmful than he had in view.  
“Into this hollow, down the dismal slope  
Comes ever any one from the first grade  
Whose only punishment is crippled hope?”  
So questioned I; and this reply he made:  
“Rarely does any out of our abode  
Journey, as I am doing, to this glade.  
Once previously, indeed, I took this road  
Conjured by that Erichtho void of grace  
Who erst their bodies to the shades bestowed.  
My flesh was bare of me but little space,  
When she compelled me enter yonder mure,  
To draw a spirit forth from Judas’ place.  
That is the lowest round, and most obscure,  
And farthest from the all-circling Heaven: the path  
I know full well: therefore be thou secure.  
This marish, breathing forth the fetid scath,  
Begirds the woeful city of the dead,  
Where now we cannot enter without wrath.”

I bear not now in mind what more he said,  
 Because so fast were riveted mine eyes  
 To that high tower with summit glowing red,  
 Where on a sudden up erect arise  
 Infernal Furies three of bloody dye,  
 Who have the limbs of women and their guise;  
 Bright green the hydras they are girded by;  
 Little horned serpents pleated in a braid  
 Like tresses round their cruel temples lie.  
 And recognizing every cruel maid  
 Of her, the Queen of everlasting woe,  
 "Behold," he bade me, "the Erinyes dread.  
 This is Megaera on the left, and lo!  
 Alecto weeping yonder on the right;  
 Tisiphone is between," he ended so.  
 Each with her talons rips her breast; they smite  
 Upon themselves with palms, so loudly wailing  
 That close I press the Poet in affright.  
 "Medusa come, with stone his body scaling,"  
 All shouted looking downward; "to our bane  
 Avenged we not on Theseus his assailing."  
 "Turn round, and let thine eyes close shut remain:  
 For should the Gorgon come, and shouldst thou see,  
 There would be no returning up again."  
 Thus said the Master; and thereafter he  
 Turned me, nor trusted to my hands alone,  
 But also with his own blindfolded me.  
 O ye who hold sane intellect your own,  
 Consider heedfully the hidden lore  
 Whereon the veil of the strange verse is thrown!  
 And now there came the troubled waters o'er  
 A crashing clangor of a fearful kind,  
 Whereat were trembling yon and hither shore:  
 Not otherwise it was than when the wind,  
 By dint of adverse heats grown wild and high,  
 Tosses the forest boughs, and unconfined

*It seems to be agreed that the Furies represent pangs of conscience. But what is the Gorgon? Some say, Doubt, which turns the heart to stone; others make it an emblem of the hardening effect of Despair. The modern psychoanalyst might term it the Medusa-complex, and bring about the opening of the gate without the intervention of the Messenger of Heaven. But his coming is one of the high points of the Poem*

Shatters, and dashes down, and sweeps them by:  
    Superbly whirls along in dust and gloom,  
    Making the wild beasts and the shepherds fly.  
He loosed mine eyes: "Across that ancient foam  
    Be now the nerve of sight directed yond,"  
    He bade me, "where most pungent is the fume."  
As frogs before their serpent-foe abscond,  
    All slipping through the water in retreat  
    Till squatted on the bottom of the pond,  
So saw I thousands of lost spirits fleet  
    Away before a Certain One who plied  
    Over the Stygian ford with unwet feet.  
He often fanned that fetid air aside,  
    By waving the left hand before his face,  
    And only with that trouble seemed annoyed.  
Well I perceived him sent from Heavenly place,  
    And turned me to the Master, who made sign  
    That I stand quiet and my knees abase.  
Ah, how he seemed replete with scorn condign!  
    When with a little wand he touched the gate  
    It opened,—nor came any to confine.  
"O abject race, from Heaven how alienate!"  
    Began he, standing on the horrible sill,  
    "How harbor ye this insolence so great?  
Wherefore recalcitrate against that Will  
    Which from its purpose never can be shut,  
    And which has many a time increased your ill?  
What profits it against the Fates to butt?  
    For this your Cerberus, as well ye ween,  
    Is going yet with chin and gullet cut."  
Then he turned back along the way obscene  
    Speaking no word to us, but did advance  
    Like one constrained and urged by care more keen  
Than that of him soliciting his glance.  
    And we went forward to the City of Dis,  
    Secure after the holy ordinance.



We entered without arms or armistice:  
 And I, because I had desire to know  
 The state of them lockt in such jail as this,  
 Being within, cast round mine eye; and lo!  
 On either hand a spacious plain was shown  
 Replete with cruel torment and with woe.  
 Even as at Arles, where ponds the river Rhone,  
 Even as at Pola near Quarnaro Bay  
 Which bathes Italia's liminary zone,  
 Sepulchers strew the ground in rough array:  
 Here upon every hand it was the same,  
 Except that here more bitter was the way:  
 For scattered in among the tombs was flame,  
 Whereby such utter heat in them arose  
 That never craft can more from iron claim.  
 Their lids were lifted all, and out of those  
 Were issuing such dire lamenting cries,  
 As told of wretched ones and full of woes.  
 "Master," said I, "what people on this wise  
 Finding within these burial-chests their bed,  
 Make themselves audible with woeful sighs?"  
 "Here the arch-heretics," to me he said,  
 "With followers of every sect are pent:  
 More than thou thinkst the tombs are tenanted.  
 Like unto like are here in burial blent,  
 And heated more and less the monuments."  
 Then, when he to the right had turned, we went  
 Between the tortures and high battlements.

*At Arles the  
 Rhone no longer  
 "ponds," al-  
 though its tend-  
 ency to do so  
 is manifest in  
 La Camargue, a  
 little below. A  
 few relics of the  
 ancient ceme-  
 tery are still to  
 be seen there.  
 But in the Great  
 War Italy has  
 finally regained  
 its boundary on  
 the Gulf of  
 Quarnaro, be-  
 yond Pola*

## X

## SIXTH CIRCLE: FARINATA OF THE UBERTI

*Dante exhibits the great heretics, as he does the virtuous pagans, with frank admiration. The lofty figure of Farinata is portrayed with the same sympathy, not to say partiality, with which Milton draws his imposing Satan. The poet's attitude is much the same in the case of Ulysses (Canto xxvi)*

My Master now along a hidden track

Between the city rampart and the fires,  
Goes forward, and I follow at his back.

"O Virtue high, that through these impious gyres  
Dost wheel me at thy pleasure," began I,  
"Speak to me,—give content to my desires.

The people in the sepulchers that lie,  
Might they be seen? With lifted covers burn  
They ever, and no one keeps guard thereby."

"All will be shut within, when they return  
Back from Jehosaphat," thereat he said,  
"Bringing their bodies from the burial urn.

Herein with Epicurus have their bed  
His followers one and all, who represent  
The spirit with the body to be dead.

But soon shalt thou within here have content  
As to the question which thou hast proposed,  
And to the wish whereof thou'rt reticent."

And I: "Good Leader, I do not keep closed  
My heart from thee, except that words be few:  
Nor hast thou me now first thereto disposed."

"O Tuscan, thou who goest living through  
The city of fire, speaking becomingly,  
May it please thee stay thy steps in this purlieu!

The fashion of thy speech proclaimeth thee  
A native of that land of noble pride  
Which haply suffered too much harm from me."

Suddenly in such accents some one cried  
From out one of the coffers; startled now,  
I drew a little closer to my Guide.

Whereat he said: "Turn round; what doest thou?"

"Lo! Farinata, standing at full height:  
And thou canst see him all from belt to brow."

Upon his countenance I fixt my sight;  
 And he was lifting up his brow and breast,  
 As looking upon Hell with great despite.  
 My Leader pusht me to his burial-chest  
 Among the tombs with bold and ready hand,  
 "Be chary of thy words!" was his behest.  
 When at the bottom of his tomb I stand,  
 Awhile he eyes me; then, with some disdain,  
 Inquires: "Who were thy fathers in the land?"  
 And I, to be compliant wholly fain,  
 Conceal it not, revealing to him all.  
 He slightly lifts his brow, then speaks again:  
 "Fiercely to mine were they inimical,  
 To me, and to the cause I had at heart,  
 And therefore twice I scattered them withal."  
 "Though banisht, they came back from every part,"  
 I answered him, "both once and yet anew;  
 But yours have never rightly learnt that art."  
 Then, alongside of him, arose to view  
 A shade uncovered to the chin; and bent  
 Upon the knees, I think it upward drew.  
 It peered all round about me, as intent  
 To look for some one who escaped its ken;  
 But when expectancy was wholly spent,  
 Weeping it said: "If through this sunless den,  
 Thou goest because of lofty genius,  
 Where is my son, and why not with thee then?"  
 "Of mine own self," said I, "I come not thus:  
 He, waiting yonder, leads, of whom perchance  
 Your Guido held regard contemptuous."  
 His words, and of his pain the circumstance,  
 Had told his name already: otherwise  
 My answer would have had less relevance.  
 Suddenly starting up erect, he cries:  
 "How sayst thou, *held?*—And does he live no more?  
 Does the sweet light not fall upon his eyes?"

*The personage by the side of Farinata is the father of Guido Cavalcanti. Guido, who was Dante's intimate friend, seems to have belonged to that Florentine type of the lofty-minded, cultivated, able, somewhat skeptical Patrician, of which Lorenzo il Magnifico is the most conspicuous example. The broken spirit of the elder Cavalcanti here sets the superb figure of Farinata in relief*

Then he, aware of some delay before  
 My answer I returned, incontinent  
 Fell back again, and stood forth nevermore.  
 But that great-hearted one for whose content  
 I had remained, no change of aspect made,  
 Neither his neck he moved nor flank he bent.  
 "And if,—" resuming what before he said,  
 "They ill have learnt that art,—if this be so  
 It more torments me than this fiery bed.  
 But fifty times shall not rekindled show  
 The visage of the Lady reigning here,  
 Ere thou the hardness of that art shalt know.  
 And so the world may sweet to thee appear,  
 Say why the statute of that people runs  
 So pitiless against my kindred dear?"

*The bloody battle of Montaperti, near Siena, in 1260, where the Florentine Guelphs were utterly put to rout by the Sienese and the Florentine Ghibellines under the leadership of Farinata*

"The havoc and the massacre that once  
 Stained," I replied, "the Arbia-water red,  
 Are causing in our fane such orisons."  
 And sighing thereupon, he shook his head:  
 "Not I alone in that, and in no case  
 Should causeless with the rest have moved," he said:  
 "But I it was, when in that other place  
 To wipe out Florence one and all agreed,  
 Alone defended her with open face."  
 "Ah! so may ever rest in peace your seed,"  
 Entreated I, "pray loose that knot for me,  
 Which doth my judgment at this point impede.  
 It seems that ye prophetically see  
 What time brings with it, if I hear aright,  
 And as to present things act differently."  
 "We see, like him who has imperfect sight,  
 The things," said he, "that are remote from view,  
 So much still shines for us the Sovran Light:  
 When they draw nigh, or are, quite canceled through  
 Our vision is; if others bring it not,  
 Unto your human state we have no clew.

Whence thou canst comprehend that blotted out  
 Will be our knowledge, from that moment when  
 The portal of the future shall be shut."  
 As conscious of my fault, I said: "Now, then,  
 I wish that you would tell that fallen one  
 His son is still conjoined with living men.  
 And if just now I rendered answer none,  
 Tell him it was because my thoughts were tied  
 Still by that error which you have undone."  
 Already was recalling me my Guide:  
 Wherefore more hurriedly did I request  
 That spirit tell who else therein abide.  
 "With thousands here," he said to me, "I nest:  
 The Second Frederick herein is pent,  
 And the Cardinal: I speak not of the rest."  
 He hid himself; and thereupon I went  
 Toward the ancient Poet, pondering  
 That word which seemed to me maleficent.  
 He moved along, and then, thus journeying,  
 Inquired of me, "Why art thou so bestirred?"  
 Whereat I satisfied his questioning.  
 "Let memory preserve what thou hast heard  
 Against thyself," that Sage adjured me so,  
 Lifting his finger;—"and now mark my word!  
 When thou shalt standing be in the sweet glow  
 Of her whose beauteous eye on all is bent,  
 From her the journey of thy life shalt know."  
 Then turned he leftward: from the wall we went,  
 Striking across toward the middle by  
 A pathway leading to a pit that sent  
 Its loathsome stench ascending even so high.

*The Emperor, of whom Dante often speaks and whom he admired greatly; and the Cardinal Ottaviano of the Ubaldini, who said when about to die: "If there be a soul, I have lost mine a thousand times for the Ghibelines." He had looked at the Gorgon!*

## XI

CLASSES OF SINS AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE  
DAMNED

Upon an eminence with margin steep,  
     Formed by rock-masses in a circle rent,  
     We came above a still more cruel deep.  
 And here, by reason of the horrible scent  
     That was belched forth from the profound abyss,  
     Behind the lid of a great monument  
 We stood aside, and saw inscribed on this:  
     "I hold within Pope Anastasius  
     He whom Photinus led to go amiss."—  
 "We must delay our going down, that thus  
     A little more familiar to the sense,  
     The dismal blast no longer trouble us."  
 The Master thus; and I: "Some recompense  
     Do thou devise to balance this delay,  
     Lest time be lost."—"My very thought!" he assents.  
 "My son, within these rocks," began he say,  
     "From grade to grade three lesser circles wind,  
     Like those above from which we come away.  
 All swarm with cursed souls of humankind:  
     But that the sight alone suffice from hence,  
     Learn how and wherefore they are thus confined.  
 Of every malice that gives Heaven offense,  
     Injury is the aim; such aim again  
     Grieves others or by Fraud or Violence.  
 But because Fraud is man's peculiar bane,  
     God loathes it more; and so the fraudulent  
     Are placed beneath, assailed with greater pain.  
 The whole First Circle is for the violent:  
     But since to persons threefold force is done,  
     In triple rounds it has apportionment.  
 To God, to neighbor, and to self, can one  
     Do violence: I say, their property  
     And them,—as thou shalt hear made clearly known.

By violence, death and grievous wounds may be  
 Dealt to one's neighbor; to his goods and rights  
 Injury, arson, and rapacity:  
 Whence homicides and each who wrongly smites,  
 Marauders and freebooters, all their train  
 The foremost rondure plagues in various plights.  
 A man may lay a violent hand again  
 On self and on his goods: wherefore below  
 In the second rondure must repent in vain  
 Whoso deprives him of your world, whoso  
 Gambles and dissipates his affluence,  
 And comes to grief where he should jocund go.  
 The Deity may suffer violence  
 With heart's denial and with blasphemies,  
 Which Nature scorn, and His beneficence:  
 And hence the smallest rondure signet-wise  
 Stamps Sodom and Cahors, and all of those  
 Who, speaking from the heart, their God despise.  
 That Fraud whose gnawing every conscience knows,  
 A man may use on others who confide,  
 Or on them who no confidence repose.  
 This latter method seems but to divide  
 The link of love that in our nature is:  
 Whence in the Second Circle there reside  
 Wizards, hypocrisy, and flatteries,  
 Cheating, and simony, and thievishness,  
 Panders, and the like filth, and barratries.  
 In the other mode there lies forgetfulness  
 Of love which nature makes, and furthermore  
 Of what begets especial trustfulness:  
 Whence in the Smallest Circle, at the core  
 Of the whole universe, and seat of Dis,  
 Whoso betrays is wasted evermore."  
 "Master, thy reasoning of the abyss  
 Runs clear," said I, "defining what belongs  
 To place, and to the folk possessing this.

*Cahors, in South Central France, was a noted seat of Usury. The attitude of Dante toward Usury is the result of a prejudice which is traceable back to Aristotle and which propagated itself until the middle of the eighteenth century, when Turgot gave it the "coup de grâce." Dante, indeed, failed to read correctly some of the economic signs of his own time*

But tell me: of the fat lagoon the throngs,  
 Those the rain beats upon, those tempest-led,  
 Those who encounter with such bitter tongues,  
 Wherefore are they within the City red  
 Not punisht, if the wrath of God they bide?  
 If otherwise, then wherefore so bestead?"

"Why wandereth thine intellect so wide  
 Beyond the wonted mark?" he said, "or what  
 Hath thine attention elsewhere occupied?"

Hast thou the tenor of those words forgot  
 Wherewith thine Ethics thoroughly explain  
 The vices three that Heaven endureth not,—

Incontinence, and malice, and insane  
 Bestiality? and how incontinence  
 Less angers God, and less doth censure gain?

If thou consider well this evidence,  
 And what they are recall to memory,  
 Who up outside are bearing punishments,  
 Thou wilt discern why they divided be  
 From all these felons, why God's hammers smite  
 Upon them somewhat less avengingly."

"O Sun! thou healer of all troubled sight,  
 So gladdens me thy bringing truth to view,  
 That doubt no less than knowledge is delight.

Yet turn a little back," said I, "pursue  
 Thy argument that usury offends  
 Divine beneficence,—that knot undo."

"Philosophy," said he, "if one attends,  
 Not merely in one passage has defined  
 How Nature in her origin descends

From art Divine, and from the Master Mind;  
 And if unto thy Physics thou refer,  
 After not many pages wilt thou find

That your art, as it can, pursueth her,  
 As the disciple doth the master; so  
 That your art is God's grandchild, as it were.

*The classifica-  
 tion of sins is  
 clear. The sig-  
 nificance of the  
 quite different  
 classification in  
 Purgatorio will  
 be pointed out in  
 a note to Purg.  
 xvii*



To these twain, if thy memory backward go  
To Genesis where it begins, perforce  
Must men their life and their advantage owe.  
Since usurers adopt another course,  
They Nature and her follower disdain,  
Because they draw their hope from other source.  
But follow, for the journey am I fain:  
The Fishes on the horizon writhe by this,  
While wholly over Caurus lies the Wain,  
And yonder far descends the precipice."

*This is an elaborate way of saying that it is an hour or two before sunrise. The Fishes are on the morning horizon, the Ram (with the sun) just below it, the Wain (Septentrion, "Dipper") is with the North-west wind (Caurus)*

## XII

SEVENTH CIRCLE: RING 1. THOSE VIOLENT  
AGAINST NEIGHBORS

The place we came to that we might descend  
 Was alpine, what beside was on that bank  
 Was such that it would every eye offend.  
 Such as that rock-fall which upon the flank  
 Struck on the Adigè, this side of Trent,  
 Whether by earthquake or support that sank;  
 For, from the summit whence the ruin went,  
 Down to the plain, the cliff has fallen between,  
 So from above there might be some descent;

Such was the causeway into that ravine:  
 And on the border of the rugged brow  
 The infamy of Crete was prostrate seen,  
 That was conceived in the fictitious cow:  
 He bit himself, when eyes on us he laid,  
 Subdued within by anger. "Haply thou,"  
 My Master sage toward him shouting said,  
 "Believest here the Duke of Athens, who  
 Up in the world of mortals struck thee dead?"

Monster, begone! for guided by no clew  
 Given by thy sister, comes this man below,  
 But passes by, your punishments to view."  
 Just as the bull that feels the deadly blow,  
 Breaks from his halter, and not very far  
 Can move, but merely plunges to and fro:

So doing I beheld the Minotaur.  
 "Run," cried my Master, who the passage showed,  
 "While he is raging, hasten down the scar."  
 Thus downward we, our way pursuing, trode  
 That dump of stones, which often as I went  
 Moved 'neath my feet, so novel was the load.  
 I musing passed. And he: "Thou art intent  
 Perhaps upon this ruin, sentineled  
 By that brute wrath, now rendered impotent.

*The Minotaur, symbol of violence, the more bestial for being half human. The symbolic union of Pasiphaë and the bull is twice referred to in Purg. xxvi.*

*The Minotaur is the fit guardian of the entrance to this region of Hell, where sins of violence and bestiality are punished.*

*Theseus is called Duke of Athens also by Shakespeare*

Now I would have thee know, that when I held  
 My first course hither to the deep abyss,  
 This mass of rock had not as yet been felled.  
 But certainly, discern I not amiss,  
 A little ere He came who mighty prey  
 From the upper circle levied upon Dis,  
 The deep and loathsome valley every way  
 So trembled, that the Universe, I thought,  
 Was thrilled with love, whereby there are who say  
 The world was many a time to chaos brought:  
 And in that moment, here and elsewhere, thus  
 Upon this ancient crag was ruin wrought.  
 But fix thine eyes below; for neareth us  
 The river of blood, wherein all boiling be  
 Who were by force to men injurious."  
 O wicked, blind, and mad cupidity,  
 That in our brief existence spurs us so,  
 And in the eternal steepes so bitterly!  
 I saw a wide moat curved into a bow  
 And such that it doth all the plain embrace,  
 According as my Guide had let me know.  
 Between it and the precipice did race  
 Centaurs in file with arrows, as of yore  
 It was their wont on earth to follow chase.  
 Seeing us coming down, they moved no more:  
 And three detach themselves from out the row,  
 With bows and with long arrows, chosen before.  
 And from afar one shouted: "To what woe  
 Descending thus the precipice come ye?  
 Tell it from thence; if not, I draw the bow."  
 My Master answered: "Our reply will be  
 To Chiron yonder at close quarters made:  
 Thus ever rash thy will, the worse for thee!"  
 "That one is Nessus," nudging me he said,  
 "Who died because of Dejanira fair,  
 And for himself, himself his vengeance paid.

*He who said so  
 was Empedo-  
 cles. Possibly  
 Dante means to  
 hint that love in  
 Hell would be,  
 locally at least,  
 a disorganizing  
 force*

*The Centaurs,  
 like the Mino-  
 taur, half beast  
 and half human,  
 are equally  
 appropriate  
 watchmen here*

And gazing on his breast between the pair,  
Is mighty Chiron who Achilles taught:  
Pholus the wrathful is the other there.  
By thousands go they round the fosse about,  
Piercing with darts whatever soul withdraw  
From out the blood, more than its crime allot."  
Nearing those fleet wild animals, we saw  
Chiron take up a shaft and with the notch  
He ruffled back his beard behind his jaw.  
When his huge mouth he had uncovered, "Watch!  
Are ye aware," thus to his mates he said,  
"That he behind moves whatso'er he touch?  
Not so are wont the footfalls of the dead."  
And my good Leader, level with his breast  
Where the two natures are together wed,  
Replied: "Indeed he lives, and by behest  
Alone I show him thus the dark defile:  
Necessity, not choice, impels the quest.  
From singing Alleluiah paused awhile  
One who commits to me this office new;  
He is no robber, I no spirit vile.  
But by that Virtue which gives motion to  
My feet along so wild a thoroughfare,  
Give us for escort any one of you,  
That he may show us where to ford, and bear  
This man upon his back across the tide:  
For 'tis no spirit that can walk the air."  
"Turn about, Nessus, so to be their guide,"  
Said Chiron, round upon his right breast bent:  
"If other troop encounter, warn aside."  
Together with the trusty guide we went  
Along the boiling of the crimson flood,  
Wherein the boiled were making loud lament.  
I saw who plunged there to the eyebrows stood:  
"Once these," the Centaur great took up the tale,  
"Were tyrants steeped in pillage and in blood."

The ruthless wrongs they wrought they here bewail:  
 Here Alexander, fell Dionysius who  
 Made woeful years in Sicily prevail;  
 And yonder brow with hair so black of hue  
 Is Ezzelin; that other, fair of face,  
 Obizzo of Este, whom his bastard slew  
 Up in the world, to truly state the case."—  
 Then turned I to the Poet, and he said:  
 "Give him the first and me the second place."  
 A little farther on the Centaur led  
 And paused above a folk whose evil fate  
 Plunged them throat-high within that boiling red.  
 He showed a shade alone and separate,  
 Saying: "That spirit cleft within God's breast  
 The heart that still by Thames they venerate."  
 Then saw I people who with head and chest  
 Wholly uplifted from the river stood;  
 And many I recognized among the rest.  
 Thus evermore grew shallower that blood  
 Until it only cookt the feet: and lo!  
 Here was our passageway across the flood.  
 "Just as thou seest the boiling river grow  
 Still lower on the farther side, and lower,"  
 The Centaur said, "so I will have thee know  
 That on this other, with a circling shore  
 Its bottom sinks, until it makes its way  
 Where tyranny must groan forevermore.  
 Justice divine here goads that Attila  
 Who was a scourge upon the earth, and stings  
 Pyrrus and Sextus, and milks forth for aye  
 From Rinier of Corneto tears, and wrings  
 Hot tears from Rinier Pazzo,—Riniers twain  
 Who on the highways wrought such plunderings."  
 Back then he turned and passed the ford again.

*Of the violent  
 here the two  
 most interesting  
 to us are Ezzelino da Romano,  
 called a "fire-brand" by his  
 sister, the blessed  
 Cunizza, whom  
 we shall meet in  
 the Heaven of  
 Venus; and Guy  
 de Montfort, who  
 slew in church at  
 Viterbo the  
 young English  
 prince, Henry of  
 Cornwall, innocent victim of  
 vendetta*

## XIII

## SEVENTH CIRCLE: RING 2. THE SUICIDAL WOOD

Not yet had Nessus gained the farther side,  
When we began to pass a forest through,  
Wherein not any path could be descried.  
Not green the foliage, but of dusky hue;  
Not smooth the boughs, but gnarled and intricate;  
No fruits therein, but thorns with poison grew.  
Those fierce wild animals that hold in hate  
Tilled lands 'tween Cecina and Corneto, no  
Thickets infest so dense and desolate.  
Hither the loathsome Harpies nesting go,  
Who drove the Trojans from the Strophades,  
With direful prophecy of coming woe.  
Broad wings, and human face and neck have these,  
And feet with claws, huge belly feathered all;  
They utter rueful cries on the weird trees.  
"Ere yet," the Master good began withal,  
"Thou tread the Second Round, consider well  
That here thou shalt employ the interval  
Until thou comest to the sand-waste fell.  
So look aright, and there shall be descried  
Things thou wouldst not believe, if I should tell."  
Thereat I wailings heard, on every side,  
And person who might utter them saw not:  
Whence stood I still, completely mystified.  
I think now that he thought perhaps I thought  
That through those trunks so many voices came  
From people who from us concealment sought.  
Wherefore thus said the Master: "If thou maim  
Of any of these plants one little spray,  
The thoughts thou hast will all be rendered lame."  
Lifting my hand a little then, away  
A branchlet from a mighty thorn I tore;  
Then did the trunk of it, lamenting, say:

"Why rendest thou?" Thereafter, dark with gore,  
 Began again to cry: "Why mangle me?  
 Hast thou no spirit of pity then? Of yore  
 Men were we, and each now is turned to tree:  
 Well might thy hand have shown itself more kind,  
 Though souls of veritable serpents we."  
 As out of a green brand, which burns behind,  
 And from the other side the drops exude,  
 The while it sputters with the escaping wind:  
 So from that broken sliver words and blood  
 Were flowing forth together: whence I let  
 The tip fall down, and like one frightened stood.  
 "O wounded soul!" my Sage replied, "if yet  
 Before he had been able to believe  
 What he has only in my numbers met,  
 Thou wouldst not this offense from him receive;  
 The wonder of the thing made me advise  
 His doing that whereat myself I grieve.  
 But tell him who thou wast, so that in guise  
 Of some amends, he yet may vindicate  
 Thy fame on earth, where he again shall rise."  
 The trunk: "Thy honeyed words hold out such bait,  
 I cannot choose but speak; then let it be  
 Not burdensome if I expatiate.  
 I am that one who held the double key  
 Of Frederick's heart, and, turning both ways, knew  
 To lock and loose with such suavity,  
 His confidence from others I withdrew:  
 To that high trust fidelity I bore,  
 Losing my vigor and repose therethrough.  
 The harlot who yet never from the door  
 Of Caesar's dwelling turned her wanton eyes,  
 The curse and bane of courts forevermore,  
 Inflamed all minds against me; in such wise  
 Inflamed, they made Augustus flame again,  
 So that glad honors turned to dismal sighs.

*The shade of  
 Pier delle Vigne,  
 chancellor and  
 confidant of the  
 great Emperor  
 Frederick, and  
 an able and elo-  
 quent man  
 whose letters  
 may still be  
 read. Perhaps  
 it is out of hom-  
 age to him as a  
 stylist that  
 Dante makes  
 him tell his  
 story in so  
 ornate a manner*

My spirit, through her temper of disdain,  
Deeming by dying from disdain to flee,  
Made me, though just, to self-injustice fain.  
I swear by the new rootlets of this tree  
That to my Lord, whose worth I honored so,  
I never forfeited fidelity.  
If one of you to earth returning go,  
Let him the memory of me restore,  
Still lying prostrate under Envy's blow."—  
When he a little to discourse forbore,  
The Poet said: "Let not the moment go,  
But speak and ask him what thou wouldest more."  
And I to him: "Do thou entreat him show  
Whate'er thou thinkest may content my will,  
For I cannot, for pity of his woe."  
Whence he resumed: "So may the man fulfill  
What thou hast prayed for, and full willingly,  
Imprisoned spirit, may it please thee still  
To tell us in what way the soul may be  
Bound in these knots; and tell, if licit, too,  
If ever any from such limbs breaks free."  
The trunk a mighty suspiration blew,  
Whereon that wind was changed to voice like this:  
"Brief the reply that shall be made to you.  
When the fierce spirit separates amiss  
From out the body whence itself has torn,  
Minos consigns it to the seventh abyss.  
It falls into the forest, where no bourn  
Is chosen for it, but where chance may throw,  
Here it sprouts up, as doth a grain of corn;  
Doth to a sapling and a wild tree grow:  
The Harpies, browsing then its leafy crest,  
Cause woe, and give a window to the woe.  
We shall go seek our bodies like the rest,  
But with them never to be re-arrayed:  
For 'tis not just to have what we divest.



Here shall we drag them, and the forest glade  
Shall see our bodies hanging dismally,  
Each on the thorn-tree of its injured shade."  
We were attentive still unto the tree,  
Thinking that haply it would tell us more,  
When a tumult overtook us, so that we  
Were like to one aware of hunt and boar  
Approaching to the place where he had stood,  
Who hears the branches crash the beasts before.  
And lo! on the left hand, two spirits nude  
And scratcht, fleeting along so furious  
They broke through every barrier of the wood.  
The first: "Now hurry, hurry, Death to us!"  
And the next, who thought himself in speed outdone,  
Was shouting: "Lano, not alertly thus  
Thy legs did at the jousts of Toppo run."  
And haply for his breath too short he found,  
A thicket and himself he grouped as one.  
After them, filling all the forest round,  
Were running ravening bitches black, and fleet  
As, after slipping from the leash, the hound.  
In him who cowered down their tushes meet,  
All into pieces rending him: again  
They bear away those limbs dilacerate.  
Taking me by the hand, my Leader then  
Led forward to the bush, with many a sigh  
Lamenting through its bleeding wounds in vain.  
"O James of Sant' Andrea," was its cry,  
"Of making me thy screen what is the good?  
For all thy wicked life what blame have I?"  
The Master said when he beside it stood:  
"Who wast thou that, through wounds so numerous  
Art blowing forth thy woeful words with blood?"  
"O souls that hither come," he said to us,  
"To view the shameful havoc that from me  
Has rended all away my foliage thus,

*It was a characteristic popular superstition at Florence that the continual strife that raged there was due to the jealousy of the ancient patron god, Mars. The present Baptistery, the old Cathedral, was pretty certainly built on the foundation of an ancient temple of Mars. Compare the significant reference to the maleficence of the mutilated statue of the god on the Ponte Vecchio (Par. xvi, near end of canto)*

Gather it up beneath the wretched tree.

Mine was the town that her first patron for

The Baptist changed: and for this reason he

Will plague her with his art forevermore.

And, were it not that still of him remain

Some features where men cross the Arno o'er,

Those citizens who built the town again

Upon the ashes left by Attila,

Would have performed the labor all in vain.

With mine own house I made myself away."

## XIV

## SEVENTH CIRCLE: RING 3. DEFIERS OF GOD

Because for native country reverent,  
Perforce I gathered up the scattered leaves  
And gave them back to him, whose voice was spent.  
Thence came we to the boundary which cleaves  
The Second Rondure from the Third, where dread  
Mode of eternal justice one perceives.  
To show the new things clearly, be it said  
That we arrived upon a desert plain  
Which banishes all plants from off its bed.  
The woeful wood enwreathes it, as again  
The dismal moat encloses that around:  
Here, hard upon the verge, did we remain.  
An arid and dense sand composed the ground,  
Nor was it formed and fashioned otherhow  
Than that of old where Cato footing found.  
Vengeance of God! O how much oughtest thou  
By every person to be held in awe  
Who reads that which was manifested now!  
Manifold flocks of naked souls I saw  
Who all did woeful lamentations pour,  
And they seemed subject unto diverse law.  
Supine were lying some upon the floor,  
And some were sitting all together bent,  
And others went about forevermore.  
The more were those who round about there went,  
And fewer those who lay in torment low,  
But had their tongues more loosened to lament.  
Above that waste of sand, descending slow,  
Rained everywhere dilated flakes of fire,  
As upon Alps, without a wind, the snow.  
As Alexander, where the heat is dire  
In India, upon his host beheld  
Flames fall, as far as to the ground entire;

Whereat he with his legions was compelled  
 To trample down the soil, for better so  
 The flames, remaining single, could be quelled:  
 Such was descending the eternal glow;  
 Whereby, like tinder under steel, the sands  
 Were kindled for redoubling of the woe.  
 Forever tossing were the wretched hands  
 Now hither and now thither without rest,  
 Fanning fresh burning off in counter-dance.  
 "Master," began I, "thou who conquerest  
 All things except the stubborn demon train  
 That from the gate against our entering pressed,  
 Who is the mighty one that in disdain  
 Lies scowling, nor appears the fire to dread,  
 So that he seems unripened by the rain?"—  
 And that same one, perceiving what I said  
 In question to my Guide of him, did shout:  
 "What once I was alive, that am I dead.  
 Should Jupiter his blacksmith weary out,  
 From whom the sharpened thunderbolt he tore  
 Wrathful, and me upon my last day smote;  
 Or weary out the others o'er and o'er  
 In Mongibello at the stithy swart,  
 Crying, 'Help, help, good Vulcan,' as of yore  
 On Phlegra's battlefield; and should he dart  
 His bolts at me with vigor multiplied,  
 That vengeance never should make glad his heart."  
 My Leader then with so much strength replied  
 That I had never heard his voice so great:  
 "O thou Capaneus, just because thy pride  
 Remains unquencht, the woefuller thy fate:  
 No torment save thy very rage would be  
 Unto thy fury pain proportionate!"  
 Then with a better look he turn'd to me:  
 "That one was of the seven monarchs who  
 Laid siege to Thebes; he held and seemingly

*Mongibello is  
 another name  
 for Etna, where  
 the Cyclopes had  
 their forge*

Holds God in scorn, and gives contempt to view:  
But, as I said to him, his spiteful mood  
Is for his breast adornment very due.  
Now follow me, and let thy heed be good  
Not on the burning sand thy feet to set,  
But keep them ever back, close to the wood.”  
In silence came we where a rivulet  
Gushes from out the wood: a rill so red  
That thinking of it makes me shudder yet.  
As from the Bulicamē there takes head  
A brooklet which the sinful women share,  
So this ran down across the sandy bed.  
The bottom and both shelving banksides were  
Hardened to stone, and the margins at the side:  
Whence I perceived our passageway was there.  
“Among all other things by thee descried  
Through me, since entering within the gate  
Whose threshold unto no one is denied,  
Thine eyes not anything yet contemplate  
Noteworthy as the present stream, which quite  
Doth all the flames above it suffocate.”  
This language of my Leader did incite  
Petition from me that he let me taste  
The food for which he lent the appetite.  
“In the mid-sea there lies a country waste,”  
Thereon he said, “that bears the name of Crete,  
Under whose king the world of old was chaste.  
There is a mountain, Ida, once the seat  
Of laughing waters and of leafy shade;  
Today it lies deserted and effete.  
Once Rhea in this faithful cradle laid  
Her son; and to conceal him should he raise  
His voice to weep, caused clamors to be made.  
A tall old man within the mountain stays,  
Who doth his back to Damietta hold,  
And upon Rome, as in a mirror, gaze:

*Bulicamē: name of a hot mineral spring at Viterbo, from which water seems to have been conducted to the houses of unfortunate women*

*The tall old man  
in the cavern of  
the Cretan  
Mount Ida  
seems to sym-  
bolize histori-  
cally the human  
race facing west-  
ward, its tears  
supplying the  
rivers of Hell*

His head is fashioned of the finest gold,  
And of pure silver are the arms and breast,  
Whence to the fork he is of brazen mold;  
Thence downward all is iron, of the best,  
Save the right foot of terra cotta, and more  
Doth he on that than on the other rest.  
Every part, except the golden ore,  
Is broken by a cleft where tears distill,  
And, gathering, perforate that cavern floor.  
They fall cascading to this valley,—fill  
And Acheron and Styx and Phlegethon;  
Then flow along this narrow channel, till  
They come where there is no more going down:  
They form Cocytus,—that pool shalt thou know  
By seeing: so be here description none.”  
And I: “If thus the present brooklet flow  
Down from our world wherein its source is found,  
Why does it only on this border show?”  
And he to me: “Thou knowest the place is round;  
And though thou comest from a distant place,  
Still to the left toward the bottom bound,  
Thou dost not yet the circle fully trace:  
Wherefore if something novel comes to view,  
It ought not to bring wonder to thy face.”  
“Where found is Phlegethon,” said I anew,  
“And Lethë? for of one thou’rt silent, Lord,  
And sayest the other to this rain is due.”  
“Thy questions please,” he said, “in every word,  
Although the crimson brook’s ebullience  
Might well the answer unto one afford.  
Lethë shalt see, but from this fosse far hence,  
There where to lave themselves the souls repair,  
When guilt has been removed by penitence.”  
Then added he: “The time is come to fare  
Out of the wood: take heed thou follow me:  
The banks, not burning, form a thoroughfare,  
And all the space above from flame is free.”

## XV

SEVENTH CIRCLE: RING 3. DANTE MEETS  
A GREAT TEACHER

Now bears us over one of the hard banks,  
And fumes above the brooklet, shading well,  
Shelter from fire the water and the flanks.  
As Flemings, who 'twixt Bruges and Wissant dwell,  
Fearing the floodtides that upon them run,  
Throw up the dike the ocean to repel,  
And as by Brenta does the Paduan,  
His villas and his villages to spare  
Before Carinthia ever feels the sun:  
Of like formation those were fashioned there,  
Though not so high nor of so broad a base  
The Master made them, whosoe'er he were.  
We were so distant from the forest chase  
By this, that I could never have descried  
The spot, though backward I had turned my face;  
And now we met along the margin side  
A company of spirits coming by,  
Who each peered at us, as at eventide  
Beneath new moon, we one another spy;  
And they were puckering their brows at us  
Like an old tailor at the needle's eye.  
By such a family inspected thus,  
Well-known I proved to one of them, who caught  
My garment's hem, and cried: "How marvelous!"  
And when he stretcht his arm, a glance I brought  
To bear so fixt upon his branded hue,  
That his scorcht countenance prevented not  
His recognition by my inner view;  
And to his visage bending mine anigh,  
I answered: "Ser Brunetto, is it you?"  
"My son," he said, "be not displeased if I,  
Brunet' Latini, backward with thee fare  
A little way, and let the train go by."

*Brunetto Latini was a distinguished citizen and man of letters who had powerfully influenced Dante in the latter's earlier years. Brunetto's principal work was written in French,—“Le Livre dou Tresor,”—a compilation of encyclopedic character held at that time in high esteem.*

“That is,” I said to him, “my urgent prayer;  
 And if you wish me sit with you, I fain  
 Will do it, if it please my Leader there.”  
 “O son,” he said, “whoever of this train  
 But pauses, lies thereon a century low,  
 Without a fan when pelts the fiery rain.  
 Therefore pass on: I at thy skirts will go,  
 And then rejoin my fellows, who lament,  
 While faring onward, their eternal woe.”  
 I durst not from the causeway make descent  
 Level to walk beside him, but did bow  
 My head, and walkt as walk the reverent.  
 “What fate,” began he, “or what fortune now  
 Leads thee down hither ere thy final day?  
 And who may this one be that shows thee how?”  
 “Up in the clear life yonder,” did I say,  
 “Or ever yet my age was fully come,  
 I went within a valley far astray.  
 But yestermorn I turned my face therefrom:  
 This one appeared to me returning there,  
 And leads me now along this pathway home.”  
 “If following thy star thou onward bear,  
 Thou canst not fail of glorious port,” he said,  
 “If well discerned I in the life so fair:  
 And but that I was far too early dead,  
 Beholding Heaven so unto thee benign,  
 I would thee in the work have comforted.  
 But that ungrateful populace malign,  
 Who came of yore down from Fiesolë,  
 And savor still of mountain and of mine,  
 For thy good deeds will be thy enemy;  
 And rightly: for ’mid crabbèd sorbs confined,  
 Befits not the sweet fig to fructify.  
 Old rumor in the world proclaims them blind;  
 A people envious, arrogant, and hard:  
 Take heed thou from their manners be refined.



Fortune reserves thee honor and reward,  
Such that both parties yet will hungry go  
For thee: but far from goat shall be the sward.  
Let the Fiesolan beasts their litter strow,  
Rending themselves; nor let them touch the blade,  
If ever any on their dunghill grow,  
Wherein may yet revive the holy seed  
Of Romans,—those therein still resident  
When it became such nest of evil deed.”  
“If all my prayer had found accomplishment,”  
Replied I to him, “not yet would you be  
From human nature placed in banishment:  
For I have held in loving memory  
Your kind paternal image, and now yearn  
For you, who in the world instructed me  
From hour to hour how man becomes eterne:  
And while I am alive, it is but right  
Men in my words my gratitude discern.  
What you relate about my course, I write,  
And keep—with other text—for Lady, who,  
If I attain her, can the gloss indite.  
Thus much would I have manifest to you,  
That if so be my conscience do not frown,  
I am ready, whatsoever Fortune do.  
Not newly is such hansel paid me down:  
Therefore let twirling Fortune ply her wheel  
At pleasure, and his mattock ply the clown.”  
Thereat my Master, back upon his heel  
Turning toward the right, upon me bent  
His eyes; then said: “Who notes it, listens well!”  
Nor speaking less on that account, I went  
With Ser Brunetto on, and question made  
Of his companions known and eminent.  
“To know of some of them is well,” he said,  
“Of others best be silent, for the time  
With so much speaking were too quickly sped.

Know then, in brief, that all were clerks, sublime  
In their renown, and men of letters great,  
On earth polluted with the one same crime.  
Priscian goes with yon troop disconsolate,  
And Francis of Accorso; who observes  
Such vermin, might have seen that reprobate  
Who, by the Servant of each one who serves,  
Was banned from Arno to the Bacchiglion',  
Where he laid by his ill-excited nerves.  
Of more would I relate, but going on  
And speech can be no longer, for I see  
New smoke from the great sand uprising yon.  
A people comes with whom I may not be;  
My 'Treasure' be commended to thy love,—  
There still I live: more ask I not of thee."  
Then he turned back, and showed the action of  
Those at Verona who cross-country run  
To win the cloth of green, and thereabove  
Appeared the winning, not the losing one.'

## XVI

SEVENTH CIRCLE: RING 3. THREE GREAT  
CITIZENS OF FLORENCE

I was already where we heard a sound  
Such as the bees make in the hive, a hum  
Of water falling into the next round;  
Then did three shades together running come,  
Quitting a passing company that went  
Beneath the rain of the sharp martyrdom.  
Approaching, in this cry their voices blent:  
"Stop thou, who by thy garb appearest to be  
Some one from out our city pestilent."  
What sores flame-branded on their limbs, ah me!  
Still recent ones and ancient, met my view:  
It grieves me for them yet in memory.  
Their cries attention from my Teacher drew,  
Who turned his face to me and said: "Now stay:  
To such as these all courtesy is due;  
And if it were not for the fiery spray  
The nature of the place darts, I should feel  
That thou wert better hurry, and not they."  
They re-began to dance the ancient reel  
Soon as we paused, and, drawing near us so,  
All three resolved themselves into a wheel.  
As champions stript and oiled are wont to do,  
Who for their grip and for their vantage look,  
Before they ever bandy thrust and blow:  
Thus, wheeling round, not one of them forsook  
The sight of me, so that in counterchase  
The neck and feet continual journey took.  
"Ah! if the misery of this shifting place  
Make us and our desires contemptible,"  
Began one, "and our black and blistered face,  
Let our renown incline thy mind to tell  
Who art thou that, with such security,  
Trailest along thy living feet through Hell?"

He treading in whose steps thou seest me,  
Excoriated though he be, and nude,  
Was higher than thou thinkest in degree.  
The grandson was he of Gualdrada good;  
His name was Guido Guerra: much he planned  
Astutely, and his sword was likewise shrewd.  
The other who behind me treads the sand,  
Tegghaio Aldobrandi is, whose fame  
Ought to be grateful in the upper land.  
And I, thus put upon the cross with them,  
Was Jacob Rusticucci: that I grieve,  
Truly my savage wife is most to blame."  
If from the fire I could have had reprieve,  
I should have flung me down to them below,  
And think my Teacher would have given me leave.  
But since I should have parcht and burnt me so,  
Terror availed to check the kindly thought  
Which prompted me to their embrace to go.  
"Contempt," then I began, "indeed 'twas not,  
That your condition thrilled me with, but rue  
So deep that it will not be soon forgot,  
When this my Lord spake words to me, wherethrough  
The expectation was within me stirred  
That people might be coming such as you.  
I am your fellow-townsmen; every word  
That told your honored names and actions all,  
With love I ever have rehearst and heard.  
I go for the sweet fruit, leaving the gall,—  
Fruit by the truthful Leader promised me:  
But to the Center first I needs must fall."  
"So may thy limbs long while directed be  
By living soul," that one thereon replied,  
"And so may thy renown shine after thee,  
Tell whether courtesy and valor abide  
Within our city as of wont, or thence  
Banisht and altogether thrust aside?

For William Borsiere, who laments  
 Of late with us, and goes with yonder train,  
 Speaks that which much our misery augments."  
 "The upstart people and the sudden gain  
 Excess in thee and arrogance have bred,  
 O Florence, as thou findest to thy bane!"—  
 Thus cried I out aloud with lifted head:  
 And holding this for my reply, the three  
 Lookt at each other, as when truth is said.  
 "If otherwhile so little costs it thee  
 Others to satisfy," all answered then,  
 "Happy thou, speaking with impunity.  
 Whence if, escapt this place of gloom, again  
 Returned to see the starry heavens fair,  
 Thou shalt rejoice to utter, 'I have been,'  
 Pray speak of us unto the people there."  
 Now break they up the wheel, and as they part,  
 Their nimble legs appear to wing the air.  
 It is not possible "Amen" could start  
 From tongue as quick as their evanishment:  
 Wherefore it pleased my Master to depart.  
 I followed, and but little way we went,  
 Before so near us was the water's sound,  
 That, for all speaking, scarce were hearing lent.  
 Even as that stream which holds its proper ground  
 The first, from Monte Viso to the sea  
 Eastward, upon the Apennine's left bound,—  
 Stillwater called above, before it be  
 Precipitated to its lower bed,  
 But of that name is vacant at Forlì,—  
 Above Saint Benedict from the mountain head  
 Goes bellowing down a single waterfall  
 Where for a thousand there were room instead:  
 Thus, leaping downward from a scarpèd wall,  
 We heard that tinted water make such din,  
 That it would soon have stunned the ear withal.

*Monte Viso*  
 (Chaucer's  
 "Vesulus the  
 colde") is at the  
 head of the Po.  
 The river here  
 referred to, the  
 Montone, was  
 the first river  
 north of the  
 Apennines  
 which had an  
 independent  
 course to the sea.  
 Dante makes his  
 geographical  
 references an  
 element of  
 poetry, as after  
 him did Milton

*The cord is supposed to be the girdle of St. Francis, who intended it as an emblem of the binding of the wild beast of the body. The old commentator, Buti, states that Dante was once a member of that order of Franciscans called from the cord, Cordeliers. So the celebrated Guido da Montefeltro, who tells his dramatic story in Canto xxvii*

I had a cord that girt my garment in,  
 For with it I had once thought requisite  
 To take the leopard of the painted skin.  
 As soon as I had loosed it from me quite,  
 To the commandment of my Guide submit,  
 I reacht it to him, coiled and wound up tight.  
 Whereon he turned toward the right, and this,  
 A little out beyond the verge, did fling  
 Down into that precipitous abyss.  
 "Now surely it must be that some new thing,"  
 I said within, "answer the signal new  
 Which thus the Master's eye is following."  
 Ah me! how cautious should men be and do  
 Near those who witness not alone the deeds,  
 But with their wisdom to the thoughts look through!  
 He said to me: "What I expect must needs  
 Come upward soon, and what thy dreams now ask  
 Must soon be such that very eyesight heeds."—  
 Aye to that truth concealed beneath false mask,  
 A man should close his lips, if in him lies,  
 Lest he, though blameless, should be brought to task;  
 But here I cannot: by the harmonies  
 Of this my Comedy, Reader, I swear,  
 So may their grace be lasting, that mine eyes  
 Saw through the gross and gloomy atmosphere  
 A shape come swimming up, of such as be  
 To every steadfast heart a thing of fear:  
 As he returns who sometime dives, to free  
 The anchor-fluke, lest vessel come to harm  
 On reef, or aught else hidden in the sea,  
 Who draws his foot in, and flings up his arm.

## XVII

SEVENTH CIRCLE: RING 3. THE WONDERFUL  
FLIGHT DOWNWARD

"Behold the beast with pointed tail, whose guile  
Doth mountains cleave and walls and weapons rend;  
Behold him who doth all the world defile."  
So spoke to me my Leader and my friend;  
And that it come in shoreward beckoned it,  
Near where the trodden marbles make an end.  
Then forward came that filthy counterfeit  
Image of Fraud to land its head and bust,  
But drew not up its tail from out the pit.  
Its face was like the face of person just,  
So outwardly benignant was its hue,  
But like a serpent all the rest outthrust.  
Paws shaggy to the armpits it had two;  
And many a painted nooselet, many a quirk  
The back, the breast, and both the flanks bestrew.  
Never was cloth by Tartar woven or Turk,  
More variously colored, warp and woof,  
Nor yet such tissue did Arachne work.  
As along shore the wherries lie aloof  
At times, in water part and part on land;  
And as the beaver in his hunt's behoof  
Doth yonder 'mid the guzzling Germans stand:  
So lay that worst of beasts along the stone  
That forms the margin fencing in the sand.  
All quivering in the void the tail was thrown,  
Twisting aloft the point of it, that bare  
A venomed fork as in the scorpion.  
"Now," said my Leader, "it behooves us fare  
Somewhat aside, far as that maledight  
Wild beast which couches on the border there."  
So therefore we, descending on the right,  
Ten steps along the outer border pace,  
The sand and flakes of fire avoiding quite.

As soon as ever we have reacht the place,  
     A little farther on the sand I see  
     A people sitting near the empty space.  
 "Of this third round," the Master said to me,  
     "That thou mayst carry full experience,  
     Go now, consider what their manners be.  
 Out there concise must be thy conference:  
     I will persuade this brute his shoulders strong  
     To lend us, against thy returning thence."  
 Thus farther yet, and all alone, along  
     That seventh circle's utmost head, I go  
     Thither where sit the melancholy throng.  
 Out of their eyes is bursting forth their woe:  
     Now here, now there, with hands they agonize  
     Against the flames, against the soil aglow.  
 Dogs in the summer do not otherwise,  
     Now with the paw and presently with snout,  
     At bite of fleas, of gadflies, or of flies.  
 When I had singled certain faces out  
     Of those on whom the woeful fire is shed,  
     Not one of them I knew; but slung about  
 Each neck perceived a pouch, emblazoned  
     With certain hue and certain cognizance,  
     And therewithal, it seems, their eye is fed.  
 And as, among them looking, I advance,  
     Beheld I *Azure* on a wallet *Or*,  
     Bearing a lion's mien and countenance.  
 And as the sweep of vision onward bore,  
     Another bag, blood-red, beheld I now  
     Display a goose, as butter white, and more.  
 Then one upon whose wallet white a sow,  
     In brood and azure, was in blazon set,  
     Exclaimed: "Here in this ditch what doest thou?"  
 Now get thee gone: and since thou'rt living yet,  
     Know that my townsman, Vitaliano, here  
     Upon my left-hand side a seat shall get.

*These are the  
 cognizances,  
 respectively, of  
 the Florentine  
 families Gian-  
 figliazzi and  
 Ubriachi, and  
 of the Paduan  
 family, Scrovi-  
 gni, all degraded  
 by the inordi-  
 nate practice of  
 usury. A draw-  
 ing of the first of  
 these shields is  
 prefixed to this  
 Cantica*



A Paduan with these Florentines, mine ear  
Of times they deafen, crying in each close,—  
‘Let him come down, the sovran cavalier  
Who with the triple-beaked budget goes!’  
Here pursing up his mouth, he made display  
Of tongue, like cattle when they lick the nose.  
And apprehensive lest my longer stay  
Displease him who had bid me little bide,  
I turned me from those weary souls away.  
On back of that fell beast I found my Guide  
Already mounted, and he said: “Take care  
That thou be steady and unterrified.  
Now must we needs descend by such a stair:  
Mount thou in front, for I between will sit,  
So that the tail do thee no harm whate’er.”  
Like one about to have the ague fit  
Of quartan, blue of nail, all shuddering  
At shadow, catching but the sight of it,—  
Such I became, on hearing such a thing;  
But his monitions wrought in me that shame  
Which makes brave servant before noble king.  
I set myself upon that monstrous frame:  
“Clasp me!” I tried to say, but utterance  
Refused to come, though I believed it came.  
But he who otherwhile in other chance  
Assisted, with his arms surrounded me  
As soon as I had mounted. “Now advance,  
O Geryon! ample let thy wheelings be,”  
He bade, “and slow be thy descending here;  
Remember the new load that burdens thee.”—  
As draws a little vessel from her pier,  
So, backing, backing, thence did Geryon draw;  
And when he felt that he was wholly clear,  
Turned tail to where before his breast I saw,  
And tail outstretching, moved it like an eel,  
And gathered in the air with play of paw.

No greater fear, I ween, did any feel,  
    When Phaëton, abandoning the rein,  
    Branded the sky, as still the nights reveal;  
Nor when poor Icarus perceived each pen  
    Fall from his flank the molten wax withal,—  
    “Thy way is wild!” his father shouted then,—  
Than mine, when I beheld me to be all  
    Adrift in air, and saw extinguisht so  
    Every sight but of the animal.  
He swims along, slow undulating, slow,  
    Wheels and descends,—this could I but surmise  
    By wind upon my face, and from below.  
Already on the right I heard arise  
    Out of the cataract a frightful roar,  
    Whence I outstretcht my head with downward eyes.  
Thereon the precipice dismayed me more,  
    For burning did I see and moaning hear,  
    Whereat my thighs gripped closer than before.  
Now I discerned, what first did not appear,  
    The sinking movement and the wheeling, by  
    Great woes from every quarter drawing near.  
Like falcon, overlong enforced to fly,  
    That without spying either bird or bait,  
    “Ah me, thou stoopest!” makes the falconer cry,  
Then settles weary whence it sped elate,  
    Alighting, after many a circling round,  
    Far from its lord, aloof, exasperate:  
So Geryon set us down upon the ground,  
    Hard by the bottom of the cliff rough-scored,  
    And disencumbered of our weight, did bound  
Off and away, like arrow from the cord.

## XVIII

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 1. PANDERS AND  
SEDUCERS. POUCH 2. FLATTERERS

There is in Hell a region all of stone,  
By name Malpouches, of an iron hue  
Like the precipitous encircling zone.  
Right in the middle of the fell purlieu  
There yawns, exceeding deep and wide, a Pit  
Whose structure I shall tell in order due.  
A rounding girdle thus remains of it  
Between the Pit and the high rocky steep,  
And in its bed ten vales divided sit.  
Of like configuration was that deep  
As otherwhere, for safeguard of the wall,  
Several moats begird a castle-keep:  
Such an appearance had these valleys all;  
And as from thresholds of such fortalice  
Run to the outer rampart bridges small,  
So from the bottom of the precipice  
Struck across banks and moats bridgeways of stone,  
Converging and cut short at the abyss.  
In this place, from the back of Geryon thrown,  
We found ourselves: then did the Poet go  
Toward the left, and I behind moved on.  
On the right-hand discovered I new woe,  
New torments and new wielders of the thong,  
Full filling the first Malpouch there below.  
The sinners naked at the bottom throng:  
This side the middle come they facing me,  
Swifter, beyond, they stride with me along.  
The Romans thus, in year of Jubilee,  
To make the people pass the bridge devise,  
By reason of the countless company,  
So that on one side all direct their eyes  
Toward the Castle and Saint Peter's fane;  
On the other toward the Hill their passage lies.

Hither and yon along the gloomy lane,  
 I saw horned demons with great whips, who dealt  
 Behindward on them furious blows amain.  
 Ah! how these made them after the first pelt  
 Lift up their heels! then truly waited none  
 Until the second or the third he felt.

While I was going on, mine eyes by one  
 Encountered were; and instantly I said:  
 "For sight of him I have not hungry gone!"

Wherefore to make him out my feet I stayed;  
 And my kind Leader, slackening his pace,  
 Consented to some steps I backward made.

And that scourged spirit, lowering his face,  
 Bethought to hide, but with small benefit;  
 I saying: "Thou that dost thine eyes abase,  
 Must, if those features are not counterfeit,  
 Venedico Caccianimico be:  
 But what brings thee to such a smarting pit?"

"Unwillingly I tell, though forced," said he,  
 "By thy explicit speech which brings the old  
 Foregone existence back to memory.

To do the Marquis pleasure, I cajoled  
 Fair Ghisola,—in whatsoever way  
 The shameful tale be peradventure told.

No lonely Bolognese I weep here: nay,  
 For rather do we so this region fill,  
 That not so many tongues are taught to say

*Sipa* 'twixt Reno and Savena; still  
 If thou wouldst have me pledge or proof subjoin,  
 Recall to mind our avaricious will."

While he spoke thus, a demon on the loin  
 Lasht him, exclaiming: "Pander, get thee gone!  
 There are no women here for minting coin."

I now rejoin mine Escort: whereupon  
 With footsteps few we come where we discern  
 A craggy bridge that from the cliff was thrown.

*Ghisola (or  
 Ghislabella)  
 was his sister,  
 whom he per-  
 suaded to be-  
 come the mis-  
 tress of the Este,  
 the powerful  
 lord of Ferrara*

*"Sipa" was the  
 Bolognese form  
 of the present  
 subjunctive of  
 the verb mean-  
 ing "to be."  
 The modern  
 form is said to be  
 "sepa." Bologna  
 lies between the  
 two rivers Reno  
 and Savena*

Ascending this full easily, we turn  
    Upon its jagged ridgeway to the right,  
    Departing from those circling walls eterne.  
When came we where a gap beneath the height  
    Yawns for the sinners driven by the thong,  
    My Leader said: "Lay hold, until the sight  
Strike on thee of another misborn throng,  
    Of whom thou hast not yet beheld the face  
    Because they still have gone with us along."  
From the old bridge we viewed the file, apace  
    Who neared us on the further side below,  
    And whom the scourges in like manner chase.  
Without my asking, the Good Master so  
    Address me: "Yonder mighty one behold,  
    Who seems to shed no tear for all his woe:  
How kingly in his bearing, as of old!  
    'Tis Jason, who by prowess and by guile  
    Despoiled the Colchians of the Fleece of Gold.  
He skirted once the coast of Lemnos isle,  
    After the merciless women unafraid  
    Devoted all their males to death erewhile.  
There, with love-tokens and fair words, the maid  
    Hypsipyle did he betray, that one  
    Who first, herself, had all the rest betrayed.  
And there he left her, pregnant and alone:  
    Such guilt condemns him to such martyrdom,  
    And for Medea too is vengeance done.  
With him go such deceivers all and some:  
    Of the first valley let so much suffice,  
    And of those by its vengeance overcome."—  
Already had we reacht the place where lies  
    The narrow path across the second dike,  
    Which buttress for another arch supplies.  
Thence heard we people whimper plaintive-like  
    In the next pocket, and with snorting roar  
    Of muzzle, with their palms upon them strike.

*It is hardly  
necessary to re-  
mind the sympa-  
thetic reader  
that no poet  
could well be  
more delicate  
and pure-  
minded than  
Dante. But it is  
impossible to  
pass through  
Hell without  
encountering  
filth and obscen-  
ity, as here and  
at the close of  
Canto xxi*

The banks were with a mold encrusted o'er  
By vapors from below that on them rest,  
With both the eyes and nostrils waging war.  
The bottom is so hollowly deprest  
There is no room to see, except one go  
Up where the arching bridge is loftiest.  
Thither we came, whence in the ditch below  
I saw folk weltering in excrement  
That out of human privies seemed to flow.  
While I was looking down with eye intent,  
I saw one head so smeared with ordure all,  
If clerk or layman 'twas not evident.  
"Wherefore so greedy art thou," did he bawl,  
"At me more than the filthy rest to stare?"  
"Because," I answered, "if I well recall,  
I have already seen thee with dry hair;  
Alessio Interminai of Lucca, late  
Wast thou: whence singled out from others there."  
And thereon he, belaboring his pate:  
"To this has plunged me down the sycophance  
Wherewith my tongue was never satiate."  
Hereon my Leader said to me: "Advance  
Thy face still further forward, till thou bring  
Thine eyesight full upon the countenance  
Of that uncleanly and disheveled thing,  
Who scratches yon with nails smeared filthily,  
And now is standing up, now cowering.  
Thus is the harlot Thaïs seen of thee,  
Who answered once her minion when he said:  
'Dost greatly thank me?'—'Nay, stupendously.'  
And herewith let our sight be surfeited."

## XIX

## EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 3. SIMONICAL POPES

O Simon Magus, O disciples vile!  
Ye who the things of God, which ought to be  
The brides of righteousness, lo! ye defile  
For silver and for gold rapaciously;  
Now it befits the trumpet sound your doom,  
Because in this third pouch of Hell are ye.  
Already had we on the following tomb  
Mounted, to that part of the bridgeway whence  
It doth the middle-moat quite overloom.  
Wisdom Supreme! of art what evidence  
In Heaven, Earth, and the Evil World is found,  
And ah! how justly doth thy power dispense!  
I saw upon the sides and on the ground,  
With many a hole the dark stone drilled, and all  
Of one dimension, and each one was round.  
None ampler seemed to me, nor yet more small,  
Than those that in my beautiful St. John  
Are made to the baptizers for a stall;  
And one of these, not many years ago,  
I broke for one who stifling would have died:  
Be this a seal to undeceive each one.  
Thrust forth from every opening, I descried  
A sinner's feet, and saw the ankles twain  
Far as the calf: the rest remained inside.  
The soles of all were both consumed amain,  
And so with flames the joints were quivering  
No ropes and withies would have stood the strain.  
As flame of oily things is wont to cling  
Alone upon the face exterior,  
So here from heel to point 'twas flickering.  
"Master," said I, "who is that one who more  
Infuriate writhes than his companions there,  
And whom a redder flame is licking o'er?"

And he to me: "If thou wilt let me bear  
Thee down by yonder cliff that lies more low,  
From him of him and of his crimes shalt hear."

*One of the legal punishments of that implacable period was the "planting" thus of the perfidious murderer.*

*Dante's similitudes imply, of course, familiarity on the part of the reader of his time with the scene referred to. The customs, habits, sports, arts, affairs of all kinds from which he draws images have greatly changed, so that we have to use more imagination in reading him*

*The references to the Church as the Lady, or the Bride of Christ, and by extension of the Pope as the Vicar of Christ, are so frequent that comment is, in most cases, superfluous*

"Thy pleasure, lord, is mine, and thou dost know  
That I depart not from thy will," I said,

"And knowest my unspoken thought, I trow."

Thereon the fourth embankment did we tread,  
Turned, and descended leftward from the bank  
Down to the narrow, perforated bed.

The Master good not yet from off his flank  
Deposed me, till he brought me to the hole  
Of him who so was weeping with his shank.

"Whoe'er thou art, thus planted like a pole  
Top downward," then began I, "do thou strive  
To speak out, if thou canst, O wretched soul!"

My posture was the friar's, at hand to shrive  
The false assassin, who, when planted, tries  
To call him back, still to remain alive.

"Art thou already standing there?" he cries,

"Art standing there already, Boniface?

By several seasons, then, the writing lies.

And art thou glutton with that wealth apace,  
For sake whereof thou didst not fear betray  
The Lady beautiful, and then disgrace?"—

Such I became as people brought to stay  
Because an answer from the mark seems wide,  
As if bemockt, not knowing what to say.

"Say to him quickly," hereon Virgil cried,

"I am not he thou thinkst, I am not he!"

And as enjoined upon me, I replied.

The spirit writhed his feet exceedingly;  
Then sighing, and with voice disconsolate,  
Said to me: "What then wantest thou of me?"

If thou desire so much to know my state,  
That for this cause thou hast the bank traversed,  
Know, I was vested with the Mantle Great.



True son of the She-bear, I had such thirst  
 Insatiate to advance the Cubs, mine own,  
 That wealth above, and here myself, I pursed.  
 Beneath my head the others down are thrown,  
 Preceding me in simony, and all  
 Flattened along the fissures of the stone.  
 Down thither shall I likewise drop withal,  
 When comes that other whom I thought to meet  
 What time I let the sudden question fall.  
 But longer now do I already heat  
 My footpalms, standing here inverted thus,  
 Than he shall planted stay with ruddy feet:  
 For after him a Pastor impious  
 Shall come from Westward, fouler in his deed,  
 Such as befits to cover both of us.  
 New Jason will he be, of whom we read  
 In Maccabees: and pliant as that lord,  
 Will he who governs France give this one heed."  
 I know not if foolhardy was my word,  
 But I made answer only in this key:  
 "I pray thee tell me now how rich a hoard  
 Saint Peter paid into the treasury,  
 Ere gave Our Lord the keys to his control?  
 Nothing in truth He askt save 'Follow me!'  
 Nor Peter nor the rest did levy toll  
 Of gold or silver, nor Matthias grant,  
 For the lost office of the guilty soul.  
 Then stay, well punisht, and be vigilant  
 In guardianship of the ill-gotten gold  
 That made thee against Charles so arrogant.  
 And were I not forbid to be so bold,  
 Because of reverence for the Keys Sublime  
 Which in the happy life thou diddest hold,  
 Still harsher language would befit my rime:  
 Pastors, your greed afflicts the world; it brings  
 Good underfoot, and it uplifteth crime!

*The ex-Pope  
 Nicholas III  
 who is speaking  
 was an Orsini,  
 whose cogni-  
 zance was the  
 "orsa" ("ursa,"  
 she-bear)*

*Referring to  
 Clement V, the  
 Frenchman,  
 tool of Philip  
 the Fair. See 2  
 Maccabees,  
 iv and v*

Of you the Evangelist had prefigurings,  
 When her that sits the waters did he view  
 Committing fornication with the kings:  
 She with the seven heads begotten, who  
 From the ten horns her sign and sanction bore  
 Long as her spouse delight in virtue knew.  
 A god of gold and silver ye adore;  
 And from the idolaters how differ ye,  
 Save where they one, a hundred ye implore?  
 Ah, Constantine, to what iniquity  
 Gave birth—not thy conversion—that domain  
 Which the first wealthy Father took from thee!"  
 And while I sang to him in such a strain,  
 Whether that frenzy or that conscience bit,  
 With both his footpalms struggled he amain.  
 I think my Leader well applauded it,  
 He listened still with look of such content  
 To the clear accents which the truth befit.  
 Thereon to take me up, both arms he bent,  
 And when he had me wholly on his breast,  
 Remounted by the way of his descent;  
 Nor did he tire of holding me thus pressed,  
 Till up the summit of the arch he bare,  
 Which crosses from the fourth to the fifth crest.  
 Here he laid down his charge with tender care,  
 Tender, for rugged was the crag and steep,  
 That goats had found a toilsome passage there:  
 Thence was disclosed to me another deep.

*This donation  
 of Constantine  
 was at a later  
 time proved to be  
 fictitious. Dante  
 lived before his-  
 torical sources  
 were critically  
 analyzed. Mil-  
 ton's translation  
 of this apostro-  
 phe will be re-  
 membered*

## XX

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 4. DIVINERS.  
ORIGIN OF MANTUA

New punishment must needs by me be dirged,  
And in a twentieth lay the theme pursued  
Of the first Song, which tells of the submerged.  
I now was wholly in an attitude  
To peer down into the disclosed abyss,  
Which was with tears of agony bedewed,  
And through the circling vale I saw at this  
A silent, weeping folk, who onward pressed  
As pace in this our world the litanies.  
As lower down on them my sight did rest,  
Each wondrously distorted seemed between  
The chin and the beginning of the chest:  
For every visage had been twisted clean  
Round to the loins, and backward they must go,  
Since looking forward had forbidden been.  
Thus utterly distorted by some throe  
Of palsy, some one may have been perchance;  
I never saw, nor think it can be so.  
Imagine, Reader, so God's sufferance  
Permit that, reading, thou be edified,  
How I could keep unwet my countenance,  
When near at hand our image I descried  
Contorted so, the weeping eyes did wet  
With tears the hinder parts where they divide.  
Truly I wept, leaned on the parapet  
Of the hard bridge, so that mine Escort said:  
"Art thou among the other fools even yet?  
Here piety lives on in pity dead.  
Who is a greater reprobate than one  
That grieves at doom divine? Lift up thy head,  
Lift up thy head, and do thou look upon  
Him earth engulfed before the Theban's sight,  
Whereat all shouted: 'Whither dost thou run,

*The soothsayer  
Amphiaräus,  
in the course of  
the expedition of  
the Seven  
against Thebes,  
was swallowed  
up by the earth.  
Dante gets the  
tale from the  
poet Statius,  
whom we shall  
meet in Purga-  
tory*

*The Poet's visit  
to the beautiful  
Lunigiana  
(named from the  
ancient Etrus-  
can and Roman  
Luni) at the  
foot of the mar-  
ble snow of the  
Carrara Moun-  
tains, is com-  
memorated in  
the lovely eighth  
canto of Purga-  
torio*

*This long di-  
gression, geo-  
graphically so  
vivid and accu-  
rate as to the  
origin and situ-  
ation of Man-  
tua, is one of  
the few passages  
not vitally—at  
least not obvi-  
ously—con-  
nected with the  
scheme of the  
whole. No other  
long poem has  
so few such ex-  
crescences,  
whose "moral is  
in being fair"*

Amphiaräus? Why forsake the fight?"

From plunging downward he was only stayed

By Minos, who lays hold on every wight.

Mark how his shoulders to a breast are made!

Because he wished to see too far before,

Forever backward doth he look and tread.

Tiresias see, who altered semblance wore

When from a male he was made feminine,

While all his members transformation bore;

And afterward he had to strike again

With wand the intertwining serpents two,

Ere he regained his plumage masculine.

With back to this one's belly is Aruns, who

In mountain land of Luni (on whose height

Drudges the Carrarese who dwells below)

Had once a cavern among marbles white

For his abode, from which he could behold

Ocean and stars with unobstructed sight.

And she whose locks unfilleted enfold

Her bosom from thy sight,—the hairy coat

O'er all her skin on the other side unrolled,—

Was Manto, who through many countries sought,

And after tarried where I had my birth:

Whereof to please me take a little note.

After her father had from life gone forth,

And Bacchus' city came to slavery,

This woman for a long time roamed the earth.

There lies a lake up in fair Italy,

At bottom of the Alps that fence Almain,

Tyrol above,—Benaco names that sea.

I think a thousand founts the Pennine drain

Of water which within that lake is pent,

Garda and Val Camonica between.

There is a middle place where he of Trent

Or Brescia pastor, or the Veronese,

Might give his blessing, if that way he went.

Peschiera, fair and mighty fortalice,  
     Sits where lies lowest the surrounding shore,  
     To front the Brescians and the Bergamese.  
 There whatsoever cannot tarry more  
     In bosom of Benaco, down must flow  
     And make a river through green meadow floor.  
 The waters gathering head, as Mincio,  
     No longer called Benaco, flow apace  
     Far as Governo, falling into Po.  
 Coursing not far, they find a level place  
     Where in a wide lagoon they stagnant spread,  
     And where in summer oft is noisomeness.  
 Passing that way, the Virgin, never wed,  
     Perceived a tract of land amid the fen,  
     Wholly untilled and uninhabited;  
 And there, to shun all intercourse with men,  
     Stayed with her servants, arts of magic plied,  
     Lived, and there left her empty body then.  
 The people, who were scattered far and wide,  
     Thereafter gathered in that place, which lay  
     Defended by the marsh on every side.  
 O'er those dead bones the city builded they,  
     And, after her who first had chosen the place,  
     Called it, without more omen, Mantua.  
 Denser therein was once the populace,  
     Ere ever Casalodi witlessly  
     From Pinamonte suffered such disgrace.  
 Hence if thou ever hear, I monish thee,  
     My city given foundation different,  
     Let falsehood not defraud the verity."—  
 "Master, thy reasons are so evident,  
     And so lay hold of my belief," said I,  
     "That others were to me but embers spent.  
 But tell me, of the people going by,  
     None seest thou worthy of note? for to their woe,  
     Only to that, returns my inner eye."—

*Referring to a  
 bloody coup  
 d'état in the  
 course of which  
 Pinamonte first  
 duped and then  
 expelled the lord  
 of Mantua,  
 Count Casalodi*

Whereon he answered: "He whose beard doth flow  
 Down from his cheeks upon his shoulders dun,  
 Was, what time Greece of males was emptied so  
 That in the cradles tarried almost none,  
 An augur, and with Calchas gave the sign  
 To cut, in Aulis, the first cable,—one  
 Eurypylus,—thus in a certain line  
 My lofty tragedy records the name:  
 Well knowest it thou who knowest each verse of  
 mine.

*The Man in the Moon was particularly Cain carrying a bundle of thorns, the sorry "fruit of the ground" that he harvested. The sky is of course invisible in Hell, but Dante will not forgo his astronomical allusion. The moon is one day past the full and sinks into the sea south of Seville (taking Jerusalem as the point of observation). That is, it is about 6 A.M.*

That other, in the flanks so light of frame,  
 Was Michael Scott, and of a truth he knew  
 Of magical deceptions well the game.  
 Guido Bonatti view; Asdente view,  
 Who now would wish his leather and his awl  
 Had held him,—all too late repents he too.  
 See wretched hags who let the needle fall,  
 The spool and distaff, for divining fain,  
 With herb and image working spells withal.  
 But come, for with his thorns already Cain  
 Doth hold of both the hemispheres the bound,  
 And yonder under Seville touch the main,  
 And only yesternight the moon was round:  
 Thou shouldst recall, for she did thee no wrong  
 One certain time within the wood profound."  
 While thus he spake to me, we moved along.

## XXI

## EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 5. BARRATORS

Discoursing thus of matters different  
    Whereto my Comedy cares not to hark,  
    Holding the height, from bridge to bridge we went,  
But halted other vain laments to mark  
    In Evil-pouches, other cloven den;  
    And there I saw that it was weirdly dark.  
As in the Arsenal of Venice, men  
    Boil sticky pitch in winter, which they use  
    To make their vessels water-tight again  
When unseaworthy; some perhaps may choose  
    To build anew,—some make it their concern  
    To caulk ribs buffeted in many a cruise;  
Some hammer at the prow, some at the stern,  
    Some fashion oars and others cordage twine,  
    And some to mend the jib or mainsail turn:  
Thus not by fire, but by an art divine,  
    Boiled clammy pitch down there, which every side  
    Smeared over the embankments that confine.  
I saw it, but naught else therein descried,  
    Except the bubbles which the boiling raised,  
    As all heave up and then compest subside.  
While thither downward steadfastly I gazed,  
    “Beware! beware!” my Leader thus began,  
    And drew me forth from where I stood amazed.  
Thereat I turned, like one in haste to scan  
    The very thing which it behooves him flee,  
    And whom incontinently fears unman,  
So that he puts not off his flight to see:  
    And there I saw a demon, black as night,  
    Run up the bridge behind my Guide and me.  
Ah, how ferocious was he to my sight,  
    And in his action how un pitying,  
    With open wings and on his feet so light!

*Dante here gives some pregnant hints about Lucca, as he elsewhere does of Siena and many other famous cities intimately known to him. Santa Zita is patroness of Lucca; the Holy Face is an ancient image of Christ still venerated in the Cathedral there; the Serchio flows near the city wall. Bonturo is excepted as who should say,—all grafters except Boss Tweed*

His shoulder, which was high and tapering,  
 A sinner with both haunches sat astride:  
 That fiend the tendons of the feet did wring.  
 "Maltalons!" pausing on our bridge, he cried,  
 "One of the elders of Saint Zita, ho!  
 Down with him, while I go for more beside  
 Unto that city furnisht with them so:  
 Barrators all except Bonturo,—if  
 You offer money, make they Yes of No."  
 He flung him down, and on the flinty cliff  
 Then wheeled about: ne'er gave so hot a chase  
 A loosened mastiff, running down a thief.  
 That sinner plunged, and aired his back apace;  
 But demons, lurking there the bridge below,  
 Cried: "No invoking here the Holy Face!  
 Here swim ye not as in the Serchio:  
 Therefore take heed, unless thou mean to try  
 Our grapples, not above the pitch to show."  
 Then, pricking him with hundred prongs, did cry:  
 "Here must thou dance about in covert guise,  
 That, if thou can, thou swindle on the sly!"  
 Cooks make their scullions do not otherwise,  
 When with their hooks they plunge the carcass clean  
 Down in the caldron, that it may not rise.  
 Then said the Master good: "Lest it be seen  
 That thou art with me, do thou downward cower  
 Behind a block, that thou mayst have some screen;  
 And what though wrong may seem to overpower,  
 Be not afraid, for I these matters know,  
 Having been in such wrangle once before."  
 Beyond the bridge's head then did he go,  
 And when he reacht the sixth embankment's crest  
 He had full need a steadfast front to show.  
 With such a stormy fury manifest  
 As when dogs rush upon a beggar man,  
 Who, where he halts, makes quickly his request:



Thus from beneath the bridge those demons ran,  
And turned against him every hook and rake;  
But, "None of you be felons!" he began:  
"Ere with your forks ye loose upon me break,  
To listen to me send ye forward one:  
Then as to tearing me your counsel take."  
All shouted out: "Be Malacoda gone!"  
And halted: whereupon one forward goes,  
Saying, "What can it skill?" as he came on.  
"And dost thou, Malacoda, then suppose,  
Thou wouldst have found me," said that Lord of  
mine,  
"Safe hitherto, however ye oppose,  
Without propitious fate and Will Divine?  
Let me pass on, for Heaven has sent behest  
That I show some one else this road malign."—  
Thereat so fallen was his haughty crest,  
That, letting fall the grapple at his feet,  
"No striking now!" he shouted to the rest.  
"O thou!" exclaimed my Leader, "from thy seat  
Where crouching on the craggy bridge dost hide,  
Now unto me securely make retreat."  
Wherefore I moved, and promptly sought his side;  
But all the devils sprang toward me so  
I trembled lest the compact were defied.  
Even thus I saw the soldiers long ago,  
By compact from Caprona issuing,  
Exhibit fear amid so many a foe.  
With all my body I drew up to cling  
Unto my Leader close, nor turned mine eye  
From off their look, which was not promising.  
Forks leveled, they kept saying: "Shall I try  
And touch him up upon the hinder side?"  
"Yes, nick it into him," was the reply.  
But that one who was talking with my Guide,  
Turned about quickly and commanded thus:  
"Bide quiet, Scarmiglione, quiet bide!"

*The arch was shattered when Christ after the Crucifixion descended into Hell. It is now, therefore, mid-forenoon of the Saturday after Good Friday, 1300*

*These are humorous travesties of names of Florentine families which Dante regarded as fair game. To this day Florence is noted for family names which seem humorous or ironical*

Then: "There's no thoroughfare," he said to us,  
 "Across this bridge, because the sixth arch lies  
 Now on the bottom, wholly ruinous:

If going forward still to you seem wise,  
 Along the present bank ye journey may;  
 Hard by there doth another bridgeway rise.

Later by five than this hour yesterday,  
 Twelve hundred six and sixty years their line  
 Completed since here broken was the way.

Thither I'm sending some of these of mine  
 To see who airs him in the pitchy den:  
 Go with them, for they will not be malign.

Alichino and Calcabrina, forward then,  
 And thou Cagnazzo," he began to add;  
 "And Barbariccia, do thou lead the ten.  
 Libicocco and Draghignazzo come," he bade,  
 "Tusked Ciriatto and Graffiacanë too,  
 And Farfarello and Rubicantë mad.

Explore all round about the boiling blue;  
 Let these be safe to the next bridging way  
 Spanning the dens, a craggy avenue."—

"Alas, my Lord, what see I?"—did I say;  
 "Go we alone and without escort now;  
 If thou art able, none for me, I pray!

If with thy wonted heed observest thou,  
 Dost thou the gnashing of their tusks not hear,  
 And see them threaten mischief with their brow?"—

And he to me: "I would not have thee' fear;  
 Let them gnash with their tushes at their will,  
 They do it for the parboiled wretches there."—

Upon the left-hand margin turned they still;  
 But each began by thrusting tongue to lump  
 The cheek, as signal to their leader ill,

Whereat he made a trumpet of his rump.

## XXII

## EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 5. COMEDY OF THE DEVILS

I have seen horsemen into battle go,  
And when on dress parade, and striking tent,  
And scurrying to anticipate the foe;  
And foragers who on you made descent,  
O Aretines, and many a mounted scout,  
Running of tilt and clash of tournament,  
With boom of bell and blare of trumpet shout,  
With castle beacons and with drums of war,  
And instruments from home and from without:  
But never yet to bugle so bizarre  
Did I see horse or foot set forward thus,  
Nor ship by any sign of land or star.  
On went we, the ten demons guiding us:  
Ah, the fell company! but in the fane  
With saints, in tavern with the gluttonous.  
Intent upon the pitch did I remain,  
To see the whole condition of the moat  
And of the people in their burning pain.  
Like dolphins when to sailors they denote,  
With arching body bounding into sight,  
That they look sharp to keep their ship afloat:  
So ever and again, for easement slight,  
Some sinner would present his back outside  
And hide it fleeter than a flash of light.  
And as at marge of flooded moat abide  
The frogs, and let the nose alone protrude,  
So that their feet and other bulk they hide:  
Thus upon either hand the sinners stood;  
But fast as Barbariccia came their way,  
They disappeared beneath the boiling flood.  
I saw (whereat my heart quakes to this day)  
One lingering thus—as it will often chance  
That while the frogs are diving, one will stay:

Him Graffiacane, standing near, with lance  
Hookt in his pitch-entangled locks, updrew,  
So that he seemed an otter to my glance.  
(The names of all and sundry of that crew,—  
So had I noted them when they were picked  
And listened when they called,—by this I knew.)  
“O Rubicante, see that thou inflict  
Thy talons on his back and soundly flay!”  
Shouted together all the maledict.  
And I: “Endeavor, Master, if thou may,  
To learn what luckless spirit thus doth lie  
To clutches of his enemies a prey.”  
My Leader up beside him drawing nigh,  
Demanded whence he came, and this his word:  
“Born in the Kingdom of Navarre was I.  
My mother placed me servant to a lord,  
For she had borne me to a worthless blade,  
Destroyer of himself and of his hoard.  
Of good King Tybalt then retainer made,  
In barratry attained I mastership,  
Wherefore down here hot reckoning is paid.”  
And Ciriatto, each way from whose lip  
A tusk, as of a boar, protruded long,  
Gave him to feel how one of them could rip.  
The mouse was fallen evil cats among,  
But Barbariccia locked him in embrace,  
Saying: “Stand off from him, while I emprong!”  
Then to my Master turning round the face,  
Added: “Ask on, if thou wouldst have him show  
Yet more, before the other fiends deface.”  
“Now of the other sinners, dost thou know,”  
My Leader said, “any Italian here  
Beneath the pitch?” And he: “Short while ago  
I quitted one who was their neighbor near;  
Would I were still with him in cover laid,  
So neither claw nor grapple should I fear.”

"We bear too much!" then Libicocco said,  
 As with the hook he caught his arm amain,  
 And, rending, bore away a sinew-shred.  
 And Draghignazzo for a grip was fain  
 Down at the legs; whence their Decurion  
 With grim demeanor turned and turned again.  
 When they were somewhat pacified anon,  
 My Guide inquired of him, without delay,  
 Who ruefully his wound was gazing on:  
 "Who was that soul from whom, as thou dost say,  
 Ill parting madest thou to come abroad?"  
 "'Twas Friar Gomita," answered he straightway,  
 "He of Gallura, adept in every fraud,  
 Who had in hand his master's every foe,  
 And dealt so with them that they all applaud:  
 Taking the cash, he suavely let them go,  
 So says he; by no petty standard clever  
 In office jobbery, but hugely so.  
 Don Michael Zanchè of Logodoro ever  
 Keeps him boon company; Sardinia draws  
 Them on to wag their tongues that weary never.  
 But look! I fear that other fiend because  
 His teeth are gnashing; I would add a word,  
 But for my scurf he seems to whet his claws."—  
 To Farfarello turning then, who stirred  
 His eyes askint as if for striking home,  
 Their master marshal said: "Off, wicked bird!"—  
 "If ye would see or hearken all and some,"  
 The frightened spirit re-began thereon,  
 "Tuscans or Lombards, I will make them come.  
 But the Maltalons must be well withdrawn  
 Lest my companions their vendetta fear,  
 And I, not stirring from this spot, for one  
 That I am, will make seven more appear  
 By whistling, which, when one of us gets out,  
 Is customary signal with us here."

*Gallura and Logodoro are two of the four provinces into which the Pisans divided Sardinia. Michael Zanchè was victim of an atrocious crime recorded at the close of Canto xxxiii. We meet a just and gentle magistrate of Gallura in Purg. viii*

Cagnazzo at these words perked up his snout,  
 Wagging his head, exclaiming: "Hear the thing  
 The knave to fling him down has thought about!"  
 Whence, fertile in device, he answering  
 Said: "Over-knavish am I, it is true,  
 When I procure my friends more suffering."  
 Alichino could not hold, but counter to  
 The others, said to him: "If thou depart,  
 I shall in no wise galloping pursue,  
 But shall above the pitch on pinions dart:  
 Leave we the ridge, a shelter be the shore,  
 And see what match for us alone thou art!"  
 Reader, new sport is presently in store!  
 Bended their eyes the other way all these,—  
 He foremost who had been most loath before.  
 Selected well his time the Navarrese,  
 Planted his foot-soles firm, and in a flash  
 Leapt, and releast him from their purposes.  
 Whereat they all with self-reproaches gnash,  
 He most who made them so discomfited;  
 And he leapt forward, yelling: "Not so rash!"  
 But little it availed: fear faster fled  
 Than wing could follow; down he dove amain,  
 And on, with upturned breast, the demon sped.  
 Not other fashion is the wild duck fain  
 Dive nimbly down, when draws too nigh the hawk,  
 Who, ruffled, wrathfully flies up again.  
 But Calcabrina, furious at the mock,  
 Followed behind him flying, in delight  
 At this escape, the scuffle not to balk.  
 And when the barrator had vanished quite,  
 His claws upon his fellow turned,—whence yond  
 Above the moat they grappled for the fight.  
 But the other was a sparrow-hawk full fond  
 To claw him well, and both together went  
 Plump to the middle of the boiling pond.

*Alichino,  
 whose incau-  
 tious suggestion  
 had enabled the  
 Navarrese to  
 escape*

The heat caused sudden disentanglement;  
But all the same they had no power to soar,  
So wholly did the pitch their wings cement.  
Barbariccia, woeful with the rest, made four  
Incontinently on their pinions glide,  
With hooks and all, far as the other shore;  
Down to their posts they dart on either side  
And stretch their forks toward the limèd pair  
Who were already cookt within the hide:  
And thus we left them in embroilment there.

## XXIII

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 6. HYPOCRITES UNDER  
COPEs OF LEAD

*A frog, while  
towing a rat  
across a stream,  
dives; but seeing  
the commotion a  
kite swoops  
upon both*

Silent, alone, and uncompanioned, so  
Went we, the one before and one behind,  
As on their way the Minor Friars go.  
Upon the tale of Æsop now my mind  
Was fixt, by reason of the present fray,  
Where of the frog and mouse we fabled find:  
For not more similar are Ay and Yea  
Than this to that, if with attention due  
The outset and the end we rightly weigh.  
And even as thoughts on other thoughts ensue,  
Now out of that was born another: thus  
My former terror double in me grew.  
For I was thinking: "These because of us  
Are flouted, damaged, and at naught are set,  
So that, methinks, they must be furious.  
If rancor should their evil purpose whet,  
They will come after us, more pitiless  
Than dog when snapping up the leveret."  
Already did I feel my every tress  
Stiffen with terror, while I backward peer  
Intently, saying: "Master mine, unless  
Thou quickly hide thyself and me, I fear  
Maltalons, for they hard upon us tread:  
I so imagine them, I feel them near."  
"If I were fashioned out of glass and lead,  
I could not catch thine outward lineament  
More quickly than thine inward now," he said.  
"Even now thy thoughts among my own were blent,  
With similar action and with similar face,  
So that of both I made one sole intent.  
If but the dexter bank so slope to base  
That we may down to the next pocket go,  
We shall escape from the imagined chase."



He had not yet made end of saying so,  
 When I beheld them come with wings spread wide,  
 Not far away, with will to work us woe.  
 Then caught me up full suddenly my Guide  
 (Even as a mother wakened by a shout  
 To see the flames enkindled close beside,  
 Who snatching up her little son runs out,  
 And, having less for self than him regard,  
 Tarries not even to wrap a smock about),  
 And from the ridge of the embankment hard  
 Glided face upward down the rocky shore  
 Which on that side the adjacent valley barred.  
 So swift through sluice slipt water nevermore  
 The wheel of any bankside mill to run,  
 Even when nearest to the floats, as bore  
 My Master me, that border land upon,  
 Lying securely claspt upon his breast,  
 Not merely as his comrade but as son.  
 Scarce did his feet upon the bottom rest,  
 Ere our pursuers were upon the hill  
 Above us; but all fear was now suppress:  
 Because the Providence Supreme, whose will  
 To the Fifth moat their ministry ordained,  
 Denies all power of leaving it and skill.  
 Down here we found a painted folk, who gained  
 Their circling ground with steps exceeding slow,  
 Weeping, and weary in aspect, and constrained.  
 They had on mantles with the hoods drawn low  
 Before their eyes, and fashioned by such law  
 That in Cologne monastics wear them so.  
 Gilded without, they dazzled them who saw;  
 But were within of lead, so loaded down  
 That those of Frederick were light as straw.  
 O everlasting mantle, heavy gown!  
 We went along in their companionship  
 Leftward once more, hearing their dreary moan:

*Geoffrey, Arch-  
 deacon of Nor-  
 wich, had a cope  
 of lead put over  
 his head and  
 shoulders, in  
 which he was  
 starved to death  
 for whispering  
 the news of the  
 excommunica-  
 tion of King  
 John. Evidently  
 that heavy pen-  
 alty was not  
 invented by  
 Frederick II*

But with the weight forspent, that fellowship  
So slowly came, that overtook we new  
Pilgrims at every movement of the hip.  
Wherefore unto my Leader I: "Now do  
Find some one not unknown by name or deed  
And thus advancing, let thine eyes rove too."  
And one who gave the Tuscan accent heed,  
Cried to us from behind: "O ye who race  
Thus through the dusky air, now stay your speed!  
Perchance thou'lt get from me the wished-for grace."—  
Whereat my Leader turned and said: "Now stay,  
And then proceed according to his pace."—  
I stopt, and by their look saw two betray  
Great eagerness of spirit to advance;  
But the load hindered, and the crowded way.  
Having come up, awhile with eye askance  
They gaze upon me, but their words control;  
Then say between themselves, exchanging glance:  
"He seems alive by action of his jole:  
And by what privilege, if they are dead,  
Go they divested of the heavy stole?"  
To me then: "Tuscan, to the college led  
Of the sad hypocrites, do not thou scorn  
To tell us of thy origin," they said.  
Then answered I: "In the great city born,  
I by the river of fair Arno grew,  
And have the body I have always worn.  
But who are ye whom I behold imbrue  
With tear-distilling sorrow thus the cheek?  
And what the pain that glitters so on you?"  
And one replied to me: "Of lead so thick  
The orange hoods are, that without surcease  
The weights thus cause their balances to creak.  
Jovial Friars were we, and Bolognese,  
I Catalan, he Loderingo named,  
And by thy town together for its peace

Taken, where but a single man is claimed  
 By custom; and it still may be descried  
 Around Gardingo how we should be blamed."  
 "O Friars, your iniquities . . ." I cried,  
 But went no further, for there struck my sight  
 One on the ground with three stakes crucified.  
 Beholding me, he writhed with all his might,  
 Blowing into his beard with many a sigh:  
 But Friar Catalan, who saw his plight,  
 Said to me: "That staked felon thou dost eye,  
 Counseled the Pharisees that it was meet  
 That one man for the populace should die.  
 He is laid naked and across the street,  
 As thou beholdest, and has first to note  
 Of all who pass, how heavy weigh their feet.  
 His father-in-law is staked within this moat,  
 And so the others of that Parliament  
 Which for the Jews was seed of evil fruit."  
 Virgil thereafter I beheld intent  
 With wonder on that spirit crucified  
 So vilely in eternal banishment.  
 Then to the Friar: "Be it not denied,  
 So please you, if it be legitimate,  
 To tell if lie upon the right-hand side  
 Some passage, that we may go out that gate  
 Without constraining any angel swart  
 To come, and from this bottom extricate."  
 "Still nearer than thy hope," said he, "doth start  
 A bridgeway from the belt of the abyss,  
 Spanning the cruel valleys overthwart,  
 All save that, broken, it bespans not this:  
 Ye can ascend the wreck that heaps the ground,  
 And lies aslope, flanking the precipice."  
 With bended brow in meditation bound,  
 My Leader stood, then said: "In wicked wise  
 He told the way who hooks the sinners yond!"

*During the year  
 when these two  
 were partners in  
 the mayoralty of  
 Florence the  
 palaces of the  
 great Ghibelline  
 family of the  
 Uberti were  
 razed. The  
 Gardingo was  
 anciently a  
 Longobard for-  
 tress, standing  
 about where now  
 is the Palazzo  
 Vecchio and its  
 Square*

*Caiaphas and  
 Annas. Virgil,  
 here represent-  
 ing Rome, would  
 not understand*

The Friar: "At Bologna many a vice  
I heard laid to the Devil, there among  
That he's a liar and the father of lies."  
Then went my Guide with larger strides along,  
While wrath somewhat perturbed his aspect sweet:  
Whence I departed from the burdened throng  
After the prints of the belovèd feet.

## XXIV

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 7. THE ROBBERS AND  
THE SERPENTS

In that young year-time when the sun his hair  
 Tempers beneath Aquarius, and when  
 The nights already tow'rd the southland fare,—  
 The hoarfrost on the greensward copies then  
 His sister's image white, but by and by  
 Abates the dainty temper of his pen,—  
 The husbandman, who sees starvation nigh,  
 Rising and looking out, beholds the plain  
 All whitened over, whence he smites his thigh:  
 Returning in, doth to and fro complain  
 Like one who cannot mend his wretched case;  
 Then out he comes and picks up hope again,  
 Beholding how the world has altered face  
 In little while, and catching up his crook  
 Drives forth his sheep to pasturage apace:  
 Thus when I saw perturbed my Master's look  
 Did I lose heart, and thus the balm applied  
 Suddenly from the wound the ailment took.  
 For when we reacht the ruined bridge, my Guide  
 Turned round and fixt me with that kindly glance  
 Which first I saw beneath the mountain side.  
 He spread his arms out, and, as laying plans  
 Within himself, first viewed the ruined fell,  
 Then laid his hold upon me to advance.  
 Like one who labors and considers well,  
 Seeming forever to provide anew,  
 My Leader, lifting me toward the swell  
 Of one crag, had another rock in view,  
 Saying: "Now clamber over that one, but  
 Try first if it be firm to grapple to."  
 No way was this for one in mantle shut,—  
 For scarcely we, he light and I pusht on,  
 Were able to ascend from jut to jut.

*This is not the only passage where Dante shows himself familiar with mountain climbing. He had clambered over the weary heights between Lerici and Turbia (Purg. iii), and perhaps over the Alps more than once. The allegory here is that of the difficulty of renouncing a course of dissimulation*

And were it not that in that quarter, one  
Ascent is shorter than the other, I know  
Nothing of him, but I had been fordone.  
But since upon a slant Malpouches go  
All to the entrance of the lowest Pit,  
So must the site of every valley show  
One bank upreared above the opposite:  
We clomb, however, the last craggy stair  
At length, which from the ruined cliff is split.  
My lungs so utterly were milkt of air  
When I was up, no farther could I get;  
Nay, sat me down on first arriving there.  
"Thus now behooves that sloth aside be set,"  
The Master said, "to fame we never come  
Sitting on down nor under coverlet,  
Which wanting, whoso goes to his long home  
Leaves of himself on earth as little trace  
As smoke in air or in the water foam.  
Up then, thy panting overcome apace,  
With spirit that will every battle dare  
Unless the heavy body deep abase.  
Behooves thee yet to climb a longer stair:  
Suffices not that forth from these we went;  
If thou hast understood, now forward fare."  
Then up I rose, and showed my breath less spent  
Than 'twas indeed, and said: "Go on once more,—  
Look, if I be not strong and confident."  
Upward we took our course, the bridgeway o'er,  
A craggy, difficult, and narrow way,  
And far, far steeper than the one before.  
Speaking I went, no faintness to betray,  
When out of the next moat a voice I heard  
Ill suited aught articulate to say.  
Of what it said I do not know a word,  
Though now atop the arch that crosses nigh;  
But he who spake appeared to anger stirred.

I had bent downward, but no living eye  
 Could through the darkness to the deep attain:  
 "Master, contrive to come," said therefore I,  
 "To the next dike, the inner wall to gain;  
 For even as hence I hear, but cannot heed,  
 So peering down I shape out nothing plain."  
 To this he said: "No answer is of need  
 Except the doing, for the fit request  
 Should tacitly be followed by the deed."—  
 The bridge we now descended from the crest  
 Where with the eighth bank it united stood,  
 And then to me the pouch was manifest:  
 And there I saw so terrible a brood  
 Of serpents, of diversity so great,  
 That the remembrance still freezes my blood.  
 Let Libya with her sand no longer prate:  
 Though Amphisboena, Cenchres, Pharææ,  
 Chelydri, Jaculi, she generate,  
 So many plagues, of such malignity,  
 She never showed, with Ethiopia wide,  
 Nor with the land that borders the Red Sea.  
 Amid these, cruelly that multiplied,  
 Were running naked and affrighted folk  
 Hopeless of heliotrope or place to hide.  
 Serpents the hands of these behind them yoke,  
 With head and tail transfix them through the loin,  
 And into knotted coils before them lock.  
 And lo! at one who loitered near our coign  
 Of vantage, sprang a snake and piercet him through  
 Just where the collar and the shoulders join.  
 Never was I so quickly written, or O,  
 As he took fire and burnt, and he was doomed  
 All into ashes dropping down to go;  
 And then, when thus upon the ground consumed,  
 The dust drew of itself together there,  
 And suddenly that former shape resumed.

*Heliotrope,  
 a mineral, possi-  
 bly bloodstone,  
 which so turned  
 the sun's rays  
 that the wearer  
 became invisible*

And even thus, the sages great declare,  
The Phoenix dies and then is life astir  
Again, on reaching her five-hundredth year;  
Lifelong no grain nor grasses pasture her,  
But tears of incense and amome alone,  
And her last winding-sheet is nard and myrrh.  
As one who falls, he knows not how, and prone  
Upon the ground by force of demon lies,  
Or other stoppage that enfetters one,  
Who, when he rises, looks around, with eyes  
Wholly bewildered by the mighty throes  
Which he has undergone, and looking sighs:  
Such was that sinner after he arose.  
O Power of God, how just art thou to men,  
That showerest for vengeance down such blows!  
"Who mayst thou be?" my Leader askt him then;  
Whence he replied: "I rained from Tuscany  
Short while ago into this cruel glen.  
Life of the brute, not man, delighted me,  
Mule Vanni Fucci, bestially propense:  
Pistoia was my den, and fittingly."  
I to my Leader: "Let him not slip hence,  
And ask what crime here thrust him down so low:  
I knew him man of blood and insolence."  
The sinner feigned not, hearing me speak so,  
But full upon me bent his face and thought,  
And colored with shame's melancholy glow;  
Then said: "It grieves me more that I am caught  
In misery which I must now display,  
Than when I from the other life was brought.  
To thy demand I cannot say thee nay:  
I am put down so deep as this because  
I robbed the Chapel of the Fair Array,—  
And falsely to another imputed 'twas.  
But that thy joy in such a sight abate  
If ever thou escape these gloomy jaws,



Open thine ears and listen to thy fate:  
    Pistoia shall be thinned of Blacks at first,  
    Then Florence men and manners renovate.  
Mars out of Magra's vale with thunderburst  
    Arises, in black clouds embosomed round,  
    And with a storm impetuous and curst,  
A battle shall be fought on Picene ground;  
    Whence sudden shall the mist be riven, so  
    That every White thereby receives a wound.  
And this I have foretold thee to thy woe."

*The thunder-  
storm of war  
from the Valley  
of the Magra  
(Lunigiana) is  
Morcello Mala-  
spina, whose  
family received  
and protected  
Dante in 1306.  
There is a noble  
tribute to this  
family at the  
end of Purg. viii*

## XXV

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 7. TRANSFORMATIONS OF  
THE FIVE PATRICIAN THIEVES

*An insulting  
gesture called by  
Ancient Pistol  
"the fig of  
Spain"*

As soon as those his words concluded were,  
 His hands with both the figs the thief upbends,  
 Yelling: "Have at thee, God; at thee I square!"  
 From that time forth the serpents were my friends,  
 For one of them did then his neck entwist,  
 As who should say, "Herewith thy speaking ends!"  
 Another, coiling, riveted each wrist,  
 Clinching in front of him to such degree,  
 He could not any longer jerk the fist.  
 Ah, why, Pistoia, dost thou not decree  
 To burn thyself to ashes and so fall,  
 Since thy ill deeds outdo thine ancestry?  
 Throughout the dark infernal circles all,  
 I saw no spirit Godward flaunt such pride,  
 Not him who fell at Thebes down from the wall.  
 He fled away, all further word denied;  
 Then saw I come a centaur, full of spleen:  
 "Where is, where is the callous wretch?" he cried.  
 Harbors so many serpents not, I ween,  
 Maremma, as he had his back along  
 As far as where our lineaments begin.  
 Behind the nape, upon the shoulder clung  
 A dragon with his pinions wide outspread:  
 On every one he meets his fire is flung.  
 "That one is Cacus," then my Master said,  
 "Who in the cavern of Mount Aventine  
 Has made full many a time a pool blood-red.  
 He goes not with his brothers in one line,  
 By reason of his wily practice, when  
 He stole the neighboring great herd of kine:  
 Wherefore his crooked actions ended then  
 Beneath the blows of Hercules, who plied  
 Perhaps a hundred,—but he felt not ten."

*The serpents in  
this and the pre-  
ceding canto are  
of course sym-  
bolic of the  
stealthy nature  
of the crime  
which they  
punish*

While thus he spake, and that one past us hied,  
 Lo! underneath us came there spirits three  
 Whom neither I perceived, nor yet my Guide,  
 Until they shouted to us: "Who are ye?"  
 Whereby our story to a stand was brought,  
 And them alone thereafter heeded we.  
 And now it happened (for I knew them not),  
 As it is wont to happen, that one shade,  
 To name another by some chance took thought,  
 Exclaiming: "Where can Cianfa still have stayed?"  
 Whence I, to make my Guide attentive so,  
 Upward from chin to nose my finger laid.  
 If thou to credit what I say art slow  
 Now, Reader, need there be no wonderment,  
 For I, who saw, can scarce consent thereto.  
 The while I raised my brows on them intent,  
 There darted a six-footed serpent out  
 In front of one, and grappling with him blent.  
 With middle feet it claspt his paunch about,  
 And flung the forward ones his arms around;  
 Then gashed both cheeks of him the gaping snout.  
 With hinder feet outspread the thighs it bound,  
 Thrusting its tail between them, and behind  
 Upward extending it, the loins enwound.  
 So never did the barbèd ivy bind  
 A tree up, as the reptile hideous  
 Upon another's limbs its own entwined.  
 They clave together,—hot wax cleaveth thus,—  
 And interfused their colors in such wise  
 That neither now appeared the same to us:  
 Just as in burning paper doth uprise  
 Along before the flame a color brown  
 Which is not black as yet, and the white dies.  
 The other two each shouted, looking on,  
 "O me, Agnello, how thou alterest!  
 Lo, thou'rt already neither two nor one!"

*The manner in which Dante gradually gathers, by attentive listening to their talk, the names of four of the five Florentine thieves, is an example of his unobtrusive art. The gesture with the finger beside chin and nose is frequent in Italy*

*"Property was  
thus appalled  
That the self was  
not the same,  
Single nature's  
double name  
Neither two nor  
one was  
called."  
("The Phoenix  
and the Tur-  
tle")*

Already the two heads had coalesced,  
Whereby two faces seemed to be compelled  
Into one face, wherein were two supprest.  
Now the two arms from strips quadruple swelled;  
The thighs and legs, the chest and belly grew  
To members such as never man beheld.  
All former aspect there was canceled through:  
Two and yet none the shape perverted showed,  
And such with tardy steps away it drew.  
As the eye-lizard, under the great goad  
Of dog-day heat, from hedge to hedge again  
Darts like a flash of light across the road:  
So, tow'rd the bellies of the other twain  
Darting, a little fiery serpent went,  
Livid and tawny like a pepper-grain.  
And in that part whence first our nourishment  
We draw, it one of them transfixt, then down  
In front of him fell back, and lay distent.  
The pierct one gazed, but language uttered none:  
Nay, rather yawned and never stirred a limb,  
As if with fever or with sleep fordone.  
He eyed the reptile, and the reptile him:  
One from his wound, the other from its snout  
Smoked fiercely, and the smoke commingled dim.  
Be still now, Lucan, where thou tellst about  
Wretched Sabellus and Nasidius,  
And wait to hear what now shall be shot out!  
Of Arethuse be still, Ovidius!  
If, fabling, he converts her to a fount,  
Cadmus to snake, I am not envious:  
Because two natures never front to front  
Has he transmuted, so that both forms grew  
Each o'er the other's substance paramount.  
In such wise answered each to each the two,  
That to a fork the serpent cleft his tail,  
And the stricken one his feet together drew.

The legs compacted, and the thighs as well,  
In such a manner that in little space  
The juncture left no mark discernible.  
Now in the cloven tail the form we trace  
The other forfeited; the former's skin  
Elastic grew, the other's hard apace.  
I saw the arms drawn through the armpits in,  
And the reptile's two short feet becoming long  
By so much as the arms had shortened been.  
Thereafter the hind feet together clung  
To form the member that a man conceals,  
And to the wretch from his, two feet were sprung.  
Now while the smoke with a new color veils  
The one and the other, causing hair to spring  
On one, which from the other part it peels,  
One rose, and fell the other groveling,  
Though turning not aside the cruel glare  
Whereunder each his face was altering.  
The erect one drew his where the temples were,  
And from stuff overmuch that thither went,  
Ears issued from the cheeks, hitherto bare:  
And what, not running back, remained unspent,  
Sufficed to form a nose unto the face  
And give the lips their fit apportionment.  
He that lay prone, thrust forward his grimace,  
And then his ears into his head are drawn  
As draws the snail his feelers into place.  
Lastly the tongue, which heretofore was one  
And fit for speech, is cleft, and the cloven kind  
In the other closes: and the smoke is gone.  
The soul thus with a reptile form combined,  
Exploding hisses fled the valley through,  
And the other, sputtering, remains behind:  
Then, turning to the snake his shoulders new,  
Said to the third: "As I along this way  
Have crawling run, will I have Buoso do."

The seventh ballast did I thus survey  
Shifting, reshifting: here let novelty  
Excuse me, if my pen go aught astray.  
And notwithstanding that mine eyes might be  
Somewhat bewildered, and my mind the same,  
Those could not flee away so covertly  
But that I plainly saw Puccio the Lane:  
And of the three companions did he keep  
His form, alone of those at first who came;  
The other, O Gaville, thou dost weep!

*Note*

The last line refers to the only one not named, possibly out of consideration for the Cavalcanti family, to which he belonged. The spirited peasantry of the little village of Gaville had killed the scoundrel, and now weep the vendetta wreaked upon them by the family.

## XXVI

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 8. FRAUDULENT COUN-  
SELORS: ULYSSES

Rejoice, O Florence, since thou art so great,  
Thy wings are beating land and sea around,  
And even in Hell thy name is celebrate.  
Among the robbers five like these I found,  
Thy citizens,—whereat comes shame to me,  
Nor do thy honors greatly thence abound.  
But if near dawning dream be verity,  
Within short while from now shalt thou perceive  
What Prato, if no other, craves for thee.  
If it must be, let come without reprieve;  
Serene the mind when of the worst aware:  
The older I become, the more 'twill grieve.  
We parted thence, and up along the stair  
The spur-stones made before for our descent,  
My Guide remounted now, and drew me there.  
And as the solitary way we went  
Amid the crags and splinters of the span,  
The foot without the hand had been forspent.  
Then sorrowed I, and sorrow now again,  
When I direct my thought to what I viewed,  
And curb my genius from the course it ran,  
Lest it from Virtue turn to truanthood;  
So that if favoring star or higher grace  
Have given me aught, I forfeit not that good.  
During that season when from us his face  
He least conceals whose light the world doth fill,  
What time the fly unto the gnat gives place,  
The peasant who is resting on the hill  
Sees many a firefly down along the dale,  
Perhaps where he doth gather grapes and till:  
With flames so many the eighth pit of Hell  
Was everywhere a gleam, as I beheld  
On coming where I saw the bottom well.

And even as he whom bears avenged of eld  
 Looked on Elijah's parting chariot  
 When straight the way to Heaven the horses held;  
 For with the eyesight could he follow not  
 So that aught other than the flame was seen  
 Flitting aloft, a fading cloudy spot:  
 Thus moved along the throat of the ravine  
 Each flame, for none of them the theft unlock,  
 Though every flame a sinner wraps within.  
 I stood to look upon the bridge of rock,  
 Erect, so that, did not a jut prevent,  
 To make me fall had been no need of shock.  
 And when my Leader saw me thus intent,  
 He said: "The spirits in the fires abide,  
 Each swathed within the burning element."  
 "Through hearing thee, my Master," I replied,  
 "Am I more certain; but what thou dost say  
 I had surmised and would have asked, O Guide,  
 Who is within that flame which comes this way,  
 Whose cloven top seems rising from the pyre  
 Where once Eteocles with his brother lay?"  
 "Ulysses pines," he said, "within that fire,  
 And Diomed; thus neither goes alone  
 In punishment, as neither went in ire:  
 And in their flame together do they groan  
 The ambush of the horse, whence was to come  
 The noble seed by the old Romans sown;  
 There weep the guile whereby, though dead and dumb,  
 Deidamia still Achilles wails;  
 And there they pay for the Palladium."  
 "If they within those sparks can tell their tales,"  
 Said I, "O Master, much I pray thee, pray  
 Until my prayer a thousandfold avails,  
 That thou refuse not unto me to stay  
 Until the horned flame comes hither nigh:  
 Thou seest with what desire I lean that way."

*It is hard not to  
 find a symbol in  
 the modest for-  
 bearing of  
 Dante, despite  
 his yearning,  
 from direct  
 speech with the*



"Thy prayer deserves all praise," he made reply,  
 "And therefore I accept it; none the less  
 Take heed thou to thy tongue all speech deny:  
 Leave me to speak, for I already guess  
 What thou desirest. Seeing that these were Greek,  
 Perhaps they might be shy of thine address."  
 After the flame with the divided peak  
 Had come where time and place to him seemed due,  
 I heard my Leader in this manner speak:  
 "O ye, within one fire remaining two,  
 If I deserved of you in life, if I  
 Or much or little merited of you  
 When in the world I wrote the verses high,  
 Do not move on, but one of you declare  
 Whither, being lost, he went away to die."  
 One horn, the mightier of the ancient pair,  
 With murmuring began to quiver then,  
 Even as a flame made weary by the air.  
 Waving the summit back and forth again,  
 Thereafter, like a speaking tongue, the flame  
 Flung forth a voice and spoke as follows: "When  
 Of Circe I had taken leave,—the same  
 Who held me near Gaeta a year and more,  
 Ere yet Æneas gave it such a name,—  
 Nor tender love of son, nor pity for  
 My aged father, nor affection due  
 That should have cheered Penelope, o'erbore  
 The ardor that was in me to pursue  
 Experience of the world, that I might be  
 In human vices versed and virtue too:  
 But I put forth on the deep open sea  
 With but one vessel, and that little train  
 Which hitherto had not deserted me.  
 Both of the shores I saw as far as Spain,  
 Morocco, and Sardinia's isle, and so  
 The other islands bathing in that main.

*Greeks. Likewise Petrarch, although a half-century nearer to the Renaissance, never mastered the language of Homer. Both looked, like Moses from Pisgah, to the land of heart's desire*

*The noble tale of Ulysses, as well as the preceding splendid series of images, is in refreshing contrast to the horrible scenes we have witnessed. Dante owes nothing to Homer, whom he could not read. It is interesting to contrast Tennyson's ornate rehandling of this plain tale*

I and my company were old and slow  
 When in upon that narrow pass we bore,  
 Where Hercules set up his bounds to show  
 That man beyond might venture nevermore.  
 Here left I Seville back upon the right,  
 And had left Ceuta on the other shore.  
 'O brothers,' said I, 'who are come despite  
 Ten thousand perils to the West, let none,  
 While still our senses hold the vigil slight  
 Remaining to us ere our course is run,  
 Be willing to forgo experience  
 Of the unpeopled world beyond the sun.  
 Regard your origin,—from whom and whence!  
 Not to exist like brutes, but made were ye  
 To follow virtue and intelligence.'  
 With this brief speech I made my company  
 So keen to go, that scarce to be denied  
 Would they have been thereafter, even by me.  
 And having turned the stern to morning-tide,  
 For the mad flight we plied the wingèd oar,  
 Steadily gaining on the larboard side.  
 Night saw the constellations more and more  
 Of the other pole, and ours at such descent  
 That it rose not above the ocean-floor.  
 Five times rekindled and as many spent  
 The light beneath the moon did wane away,  
 Since to the passage of the deep we went,  
 When there appeared to us a mountain, gray  
 With distance, and upreared a loftier brow  
 Than I had ever seen until that day.  
 We joyed, but joy soon turned to weeping now,  
 For out of the new land a whirling blast  
 Arose and struck the vessel on the prow—  
 Thrice with the waters all, it whirled her fast;  
 The fourth upheaved the stern and sunk amain  
 The prow, as pleased Another, till at last  
 The ocean had above us closed again."

*The mountain is supposed to be that of Purgatory. The age of the great voyagers was yet distant, and anything could be imagined, for the other side of the world was as unknown as is the other side of the moon*

## XXVII

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 8. GUIDO DA MONTE-  
FELTRO AND POPE BONIFACE VIII

The flame became erect and quiet now  
 To speak no more, and now was passing on,  
 Nor did the gentle Poet disallow;  
 When after it there came another one  
 Which made us eye its summit, whence found vent  
 A vague and indistinguishable tone.  
 As the Sicilian bull, which with lament  
 Of him was first to bellow ('twas his due!)  
 Who gave it fashion with his instrument,  
 Bellowed with voice of every victim new,  
 So that, for all it was of brazen plate,  
 Yet it appeared with anguish stricken through:  
 Thus, having at their source not any gate  
 Nor outlet from the fire, into its mode  
 Of speech were turned the words disconsolate.  
 But afterward, when they had found a road  
 Up through the point, transmitting it the same  
 Quiver in passing which the tongue bestowed,  
 We heard it say: "O thou at whom I aim  
 My voice, who spakst the tongue of Lombardy,  
 Saying,—'Now go, no more I urge, O flame!'  
 To pause and speak be irksome not to thee,  
 What though I come a little late withal:  
 Thou seest, although I burn, it irks not me.  
 If from that sweet Italian land thou fall  
 But now into this world of blinded souls,—  
 For thence I came with my transgression all,—  
 Say, have they peace or war, the Romagnoles?  
 For I was from the mountains there between  
 Urbino and the range whence Tiber rolls."  
 Still was I bended down, with eager mien,  
 When now my Leader touched me on the side,  
 Saying: "Speak thou,—Italian he has been."

*The brazen bull  
 in which were  
 roasted alive the  
 victims of the  
 tyrant Phalaris,  
 who first tested  
 it upon its  
 maker,—very  
 properly, sub-  
 joins Dante*

*The Polenta family from which had sprung Francesca, and which was to be Dante's best shield*

*Forlì, where a French army had suffered bloody defeat by the person addressed*

*The Malatesta of Rimini, the bloody, treacherous tyrants to whose fangs poor Francesca had been thrown*

*Faenza and Imola, as well as Cesena, are named by their rivers. As in the case of Forlì the cognizance of the ruling family is mentioned*

*Guido da Montefeltro, the astute Christian, is contrasted to his disadvantage with the noble pagan Ulysses. There is another contrast between Guido and his son Buonconte in Purgatory (Canto v). These are three of the longer tales in the Poem*

And I, well knowing what should be replied,  
 Began to speak to him with ready mind:  
 "O spirit, thou who there below dost hide,  
 Never was thy Romagna uninclined  
 Within her tyrants' hearts to battle-play;  
 But now I left no open war behind.  
 As many a year, Ravenna stands today:  
 The eagle of Polenta so doth brood  
 That with her wings she covers Cervia.  
 The town that gave proof of long fortitude,  
 And in a bloody heap the Frenchmen threw,  
 Beneath the Green Paws finds herself again.  
 Verruchio's ancient Mastiff and the new,  
 Who ill disposal of Montagna made,  
 Still flesh their fangs where they are wont to do.  
 Lamone's and Santerno's towns are swayed  
 Under the Lioncel of the white lair,  
 From summer to winter time a renegade.  
 And she whose flank is bathed by Savio fair,  
 Even as she lies between the plain and mount,  
 Lives between tyranny and freedom there.  
 Now who thou art thyself do thou recount:  
 Be not more stubborn than another, pray,  
 So may thy name long in the world hold front."  
 After the fire in its peculiar way  
 Had roared awhile, the pointed tip was quaking  
 Hither and thither, and the breath did say:  
 "If I supposed myself as answer making  
 To one who ever could return on high  
 Into the world, this flame should stand unshaking:  
 But since none from this yawning cavity  
 Ever returned alive, if truth I hear,  
 Fearless of infamy, do I reply.  
 I was a man of arms, then Cordelier,  
 Hoping to make amends, begirded so:  
 And this my hope was coming true, no fear,

But for the Priest Supreme, betide him woe!  
Who put me back into my sins of old;  
And how and wherefore I would have thee know.  
While I was yet a tenant of that mold  
Of bone and pulp my mother gave, my bent  
Was ever of the fox, not lion-bold.  
I knew all wiles and ways to circumvent,  
And plied the craft of them with such avail  
That to the ends of earth the rumor went.  
When I began to feel the years prevail,  
Arrived that time of life when one had need  
To coil the tackle up and take in sail,  
What pleased before, now grieved me: so with heed  
To penance and confession I withdrew;  
Ah, hapless! and it had availed indeed.  
The Prince of the new Pharisees, in view  
Of Lateran, having a war in hand,—  
And not with Saracen, and not with Jew,  
For all his enemies were Christian, and  
Not one of them at Acre's fall was nigh,  
Nor yet a trader in the Soldan's land,—  
Neither his Holy Orders nor his high  
Office regarded, nor that cord of mine  
Which used to make more lean those girt thereby.  
But as within Soractë, Constantine  
Besought Sylvester heal his leprosy,  
Likewise, his fevered pride to medicine,  
Did this man seek out as physician me:  
Counsel he craved, and I deemed silence just,  
Because his language drunken seemed to be.  
At length he said: 'Let not thy heart mistrust;  
Henceforward I absolve thee: teach me how  
To level Palestrina with the dust.  
I have the power to shut, as knowest thou,  
And open Heaven: whence double are the keys  
Which my foregoer held not dear enow.'

Constrained me weighty arguments like these,  
 To such a point that silence seemed unfit:  
 'Father, since thou assurest me release  
 From that transgression which I must commit,  
 Long promise with short keeping,' so I said,  
 'Will make thee triumph in thy lofty Seat.'  
 Saint Francis came for me, when I was dead;  
 But shouted one of the black Cherubim:  
 'Convey him not, nor wrong me; for instead  
 He must go down among my minions grim,  
 Because he gave the counsel fraudulent,  
 From which time forth I have been dogging him.

*So the King in  
 Hamlet reasons:  
 "May one be  
 pardoned and  
 retain the  
 offense?"*

For none can be absolved but he repent,  
 Nor can a man repent and will withal,  
 For contradictories do not consent.'  
 Alas for me! O how I trembled all  
 What time he took me, saying: 'Can it be  
 Thou didst not think that I was logical?'  
 Down unto Minos then he carried me,  
 Who twined with eightfold tail his stubborn frame,  
 And, after he had gnawed it furiously,  
 Said: "'Tis a sinner for the thievish flame':  
 Whence, where thou seest me, am I forlorn,  
 And, going thus attired, bemoan my shame."  
 When he had thus his testimony borne,  
 The flame with anguished utterance withdrew,  
 Twisting about and tossing the sharp horn.  
 We passed along, my Guide and I, up to  
 The next arch of the viaduct, whence showed  
 That moat of Hell wherein is paid their due  
 To those who, severing, make up their load.

## XXVIII

## EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 9. SOWERS OF DISCORD

Who ever in words released from laws of rime  
 Could fully of the blood and wounds report  
 That now I saw, though telling many a time?  
 Every tongue would certainly fall short,  
 Because the heart and speech of humankind  
 Have little compass to contain such hurt.  
 Could ever all the people be combined  
 Who in Apulia wept their blood poured out  
 Upon the fateful land time out of mind  
 By Trojans, and in that long war, the rout  
 Which issued in the mighty spoil of rings,  
 As Livy writes, whose word we cannot doubt;  
 With those who bore the brunt of buffetings  
 Resisting Robert Guiscard; and that horde  
 Whose bones the plowshare to this day upflings  
 At Ceperano, where each Apulian lord  
 Proved faithless; and at Tagliacozzo's field  
 Where aged Erard conquered without sword:  
 And all their mutilated limbs revealed,  
 It would be naught to that dismemberment  
 In the ninth pouch obscenely unconcealed.  
 No cask that middle board or stave forwent  
 Was ever cleft so wide as one I saw  
 Ript from the chin clean down to fundament:  
 Between the legs hang down the viscera;  
 The pluck appears, the wretched sack I see  
 That turns to ordure what goes in the maw.  
 While I am all intent upon him, he  
 Observes me, and both hands in breast he plants,  
 Saying: "Behold how I dismember me;  
 How mangled is Mohammed! In advance  
 Of me goes Ali uttering his woe,  
 Cleft chin to forelock in the countenance.

*Trojans for  
 Romans; the  
 rings picked up  
 on the field of  
 Cannæ; Robert  
 Guiscard, Nor-  
 man conqueror  
 of Apulia; Ce-  
 perano is per-  
 haps a mistake  
 of the poet, the  
 only great battle  
 of the campaign  
 referred to is  
 Benevento  
 (Purg. iii),  
 where Manfred  
 was deserted by  
 the Apulians;  
 Tagliacozzo,  
 where young  
 Conradin,  
 nephew of Man-  
 fred, was cap-  
 tured, was  
 gained by the  
 prudence of the  
 Frenchman  
 Erard de Valéry*

And all the rest thou seest here did sow  
 Scandal, while living, and schismatic feud,  
 And therefore are they cleft asunder so.  
 A devil is behind us, who with crude  
 Cleavage is carving, to the edge of sword  
 Putting each member of this multitude,  
 When we have circled round the path abhorred;  
 For lo! the gashes reunited are  
 Ere we revisit that infernal lord.  
 But who art thou who musest on the scar,  
 Perchance because reluctant to go hence  
 To punishment, self-sentenced at the bar?"—  
 "Death has not reacht him yet, nor has offense,"  
 My Master answered, "to this torment led;  
 But to procure him full experience,  
 It is my bounden duty, who am dead,  
 To lead him down through Hell from round to round:  
 As I speak with thee, this is truly said."  
 More than a hundred, when they heard this sound,  
 Stood still within the moat at me to peer,  
 Forgetting in their wonder every wound.  
 "Well then, to Fra Dolcin this message bear,  
 Since thou, perchance, wilt shortly see the sun,  
 That if he would not quickly join me here,  
 Let him be armed with food, or be undone  
 By the Novarese, because of stress of snow:  
 Else were their victory not so lightly won."  
 When he had lifted up one foot to go,  
 Mohammed spoke to me such words as those,  
 Then stretcht it to the ground, departing so.  
 Another, who with slitted gullet goes,  
 And who withal has but a single ear,  
 And close beneath the eyebrows cleft the nose,  
 Stopping for wonder with the rest to stare,  
 Opened before that mutilated throng  
 His gullet, which was crimson everywhere,

*Fra Dolcino  
 wished to lead  
 men back to  
 apostolic sim-  
 plicity and was  
 cruelly punished  
 after having  
 made a brave  
 fight*



And said: "O thou by pangs of guilt unwrung,  
 Whom up in Latin country long ago  
 I saw, unless undue resemblance wrong,  
 Remember, Pier da Medicina's woe  
 If thou return to see the lovely plain  
 That from Vercelli slopes to Marcabò.  
 And speaking then to Fano's worthiest twain,  
 Ser Guido and Ser Angiolello, say  
 That, if our foresight here be nothing vain,  
 With sack and stone shall they be cast away  
 Out of their ship, by a fell tyrant's guile,  
 And perish hard by La Cattolica.  
 From Cyprus westward to Majorca's isle,  
 Saw never Neptune so great outrage done  
 By pirates or Argolic folk erewhile.  
 That traitor who sees only with the one,  
 And lords the city, sight of which one here  
 Would be delighted never to have known,  
 Will summon them in parley to appear;  
 Then so will deal that neither vow shall be  
 Required against Focara's wind, nor prayer."  
 And I to him: "Show and declare to me,  
 If thou wouldst fain that word of thee be brought,  
 Him who deplores that sight so bitterly."  
 Therewith on a companion's jaw he caught,  
 And with rude hand the mouth he open rent,  
 Crying: "This is the wight, and he speaks not;  
 This, this is he who, being in banishment,  
 Quencht doubt in Cæsar, saying: 'To men prepared  
 Delay was ever found a detriment.'"  
 Oh, how disconsolate to me appeared,  
 With tongue asunder in his gullet lopt,  
 Curio, who in his speech so greatly dared!  
 And one whose hands from both his wrists were chopt,  
 The stumps uplifting so athwart the gloom  
 That blood upon the face defiling dropt,

*This tyrant who  
 sees but with one  
 eye is Mala-  
 testino, now  
 tyrant of Rimi-  
 ni, where Curio  
 had advised  
 Cæsar not to  
 delay his ad-  
 vance on Rome.  
 Focara is a  
 squally headland  
 on the Adriatic  
 near La Catto-  
 lica, between  
 Rimini and  
 Fano*

*Mosca of the Lamberti clan was he who advised the murder of young Buondelmonte, to which the origin of the great feud of the Guelphs and Ghibellines was attributed by tradition. See Paradiso xvi*

Cried out: "To memory let Mosca come,  
 Who said, alas! 'A thing once done is sped!'  
 Which was to Tuscan people seed of doom."  
 "And death to all thy kin," I adding said:  
 Whereon he went like person crazed with rue,  
 Heaping up sorrow upon sorrow's head.  
 But I remained to look upon that crew,  
 And saw a thing I should feel insecure  
 Even to tell without assurance new,  
 If Conscience did not wholly reassure,  
 That good companion which emboldens man  
 Beneath the conscious helm of being pure.  
 I truly saw, and seem to see again  
 A headless body going by, as passed  
 The others of that melancholy train;  
 And dangled by the tresses holds he fast  
 The severed head, which like a lantern shows,  
 And groans, "Woe me!" gazing at us aghast.  
 Of self he made himself a lamp,—and those  
 Were two in one, and one in two were they;  
 How that can be, Who so ordains, He knows.  
 Arriving just below the bridging way,  
 The arm with head and all uplifted he,  
 To bring the nearer what he had to say,  
 Which was: "Now see the grievous penalty,  
 Thou who to view the dead dost breathing go,  
 If any be as great as this one, see!  
 And that thou mayst bear tidings of me, know,  
 Bertran de Born am I, who counsel fell  
 Did craftily on the young king bestow,—  
 Made son and father each to each rebel:  
 Not upon Absalom and David more  
 With wicked promptings wrought Abithophel.  
 Because I parted those so bound of yore,  
 Woe worth the day, I carry now my brain  
 Cleft from its source within my body's core.  
 Thus retribution doth in me obtain."

*This Provençal poet was the friend of Henry, called the young King, eldest son of Henry II of England*

## XXIX

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 10, COUNTERFEITERS  
OF METALS

The many people and strange wounds did steep  
 Mine eyes with tears, and made them drunken so  
 That they were craving, but to stay and weep.  
 But Virgil asked me: "Whereon gazest thou?  
 What may it be that still thy sight beguiles  
 To rest upon sad mangled shades below?  
 Thou wast not wont to do so otherwhiles:  
 Consider, wouldst thou make the count complete,  
 The valley circles two and twenty miles,  
 And now the moon is underneath our feet;  
 Brief is the time vouchsafed us for the way,  
 And more to see than here thy glances meet."  
 "Hadst thou but heeded," did I answering say,  
 "The reason why my gaze was bended there,  
 Perchance thou wouldst have granted longer stay."  
 Already did my Leader forward fare,  
 I following while making my reply,  
 Subjoining then thereto: "Within that lair  
 Whereon so steadfastly I bent mine eye,  
 Methinks a spirit of my blood complains  
 About the crime that costs down there so high."  
 Then said the Master: "Baffle not thy brains  
 Henceforth with anxious thought concerning this;  
 Mind other thing, although he there remains:  
 For him I saw beneath the pontifice  
 Menacing thee with finger vehement;  
 Geri del Bello named in the abyss.  
 But thou wast at that moment all intent  
 On him who once held Hautefort,—thus the name  
 Thou heardst not, nor didst look, until he went."  
 "Dear Guide, the violent death that on him came,  
 For which," said I, "unpaid remains the score,  
 By any one a partner in the shame,

*The falsifiers of four different kinds (alchemists, impostors, debasers of coin, malicious liars) are afflicted with disguising or deforming diseases. As everywhere, there is some congruity of punishment and sin. Here, as at the close of the next canto, Virgil takes Dante to task for being too deeply absorbed. Dante's apparent adhesion to the un-Christian custom of the vendetta is one of the several inconsistencies between creed and sentiment, without which he would not be like all the rest of us*

Made him indignant; whence he passed before  
 Getting speech with me, if I guess aright,  
 And so has made me pity him the more."

Thus we conversed as far as the first height  
 Which from the bridge the neighbor valley shows  
 Quite to the bottom, were there but more light.

When we were over the last cloister-close  
 Of the Malpouches, so that to our view  
 All its lay brothers could themselves disclose,  
 Strange lamentations pierced me through and through,  
 Which had their arrows barbed with pity all:  
 Whence with my hands I shut mine ears thereto.

*Undrained  
 malarial regions.  
 The Tuscan  
 Maremma, so  
 often referred to,  
 is the wild moor-  
 land country  
 near the sea-  
 board southwest  
 of Siena. The  
 river Chiana  
 stagnated in the  
 region between  
 Tiber and Arno,  
 where Lake  
 Trasimene lies.  
 The Arno, in-  
 deed, once flowed  
 into the Tiber.  
 The region is  
 now drained*

If from Chiana's every hospital,  
 'Twixt July and September, all the sick,  
 Maremma's and Sardinia's withal,  
 Were in one trench together crowded thick:  
 So woeful was it here, and such a scent  
 As out of putrid limbs is wont to reek.  
 Upon the final bank we made descent  
 From the long bridge, and still did leftward fare;  
 And then my vision, growing keener, went  
 Down tow'rd the bottom of the pocket, where  
 The High Lord's handmaid, Equity condign,  
 Punishes falsifiers apportioned there.

It was no greater sorrow, I opine,  
 To see Ægina's people all infirm,—  
 What time the atmosphere was so malign  
 That animals, down to the little worm,  
 Fell stricken, and the ancient people then,  
 As poets for a certainty affirm,  
 Were from the seed of ants restored again,—  
 Than now to see, throughout that dim abode,  
 Languish in ghastly stack the souls of men.  
 They lie across the paunch, the shoulders load,  
 Of one another, and some creeping round  
 Shifted their place along the dismal road.

Step after step we went without a sound,  
Looking, and listening to the sick ones, who  
Could not lift up their persons from the ground.  
I saw, on one another leaning, two  
(As pan is propt against a pan to dry)  
All scab from head to heel: I never knew  
A stableboy so eagerly to ply  
The currycomb because his master watches,  
Or one who keeps awake unwillingly,  
As each of these incontinently scratches  
Himself with biting nails, for frenzy mad  
Of itching, which no other succor matches.  
So was the tetter which their bodies clad  
Played from them, as from bream knife scrapes the  
scales,—  
Or other fish, if any larger had.  
"O thou whose every finger thee dismails,"  
So did my Guide to one of them begin,  
"And sometimes makest pincers of thy nails,  
Say if there be among those here within  
Any Italian, so suffice thee thus  
Thy nails forevermore upon thy skin."  
"Italians both, whose plight so hideous  
Thou seest," weeping, one replied; "But tell,  
Who art thou that dost ask concerning us?"  
My Leader answered, "Down from fell to fell  
I with this living man am traveling,  
And I came purposing to show him Hell."—  
Thereat the mutual trestle sundering,  
That couple turned round to me tremblingly,  
With others who by echo heard the thing.  
The gentle Master then drew close to me,  
Suggesting: "To thy mind expression give."—  
And as he willed, began I: "So may be  
Your fame in the first world not fugitive,  
Fading from human mind without a trace,  
But may it under many a sun still live,

Declare me who ye are and of what race:  
 Do not, I pray, the revelation dread  
 Because of the foul punishment's disgrace."

"I was an Aretine," one answering said,  
 "Siena's Albert cast me in the fire;  
 But what I died for nowise hither led.

'Tis true I said, as did the whim inspire,  
 That I could wing the air in flight: whereon  
 He, who had little wit, but fond desire,

Would fain be taught that cunning, and alone  
 For I made him no Dædalus, made me  
 Burn at the stake, through one who called him son.

But Minos damned me down for alchemy,  
 Which in the world I practiced, to the clutch  
 Of the tenth pouch and last, nor erreth he."

Then to the Poet I: "Was ever such  
 A foolish gentry as the Sienese?  
 Surely not so the French, by very much!"

The other leper, hearing words like these,  
 Spoke up: "Except me Stricca, resolute  
 For temperance in spending, if you please;

And Niccolò, the first to institute  
 The costly application of the clove  
 Within the garden where such seed takes root;

Except the club where Caccia d'Ascian strove  
 To squander his great wood and vinery,  
 And Abbagliato his vast wit to prove.

But that thou know who thus doth second thee  
 Against the Sienese, now sharpen so  
 Thine eye that well my face responds, and see!

I am the shadow of Capocchio  
 Who did by alchemy false metals shape;  
 And, if I well descry thee, thou shouldst know  
 The curious skill that made me Nature's ape."

*Examples of fashionable, ostentatious spendthrifts. Cloves imported from the far East at enormous expense. Siena gay, elegant, rich, was the garden in which such seed took root. The club was of young men of fashion who tried to see which one could run through his fortune most swiftly and merrily. They were eminently successful and their fame is still alive in their beautiful city*

*It is interesting to find in our Shakespeare an echo of Dante. He calls Julio Romano the ape of nature*

## XXX

EIGHTH CIRCLE: POUCH 10. MASTER ADAM OF  
BRESCIA AND SINON OF TROY

In time when Juno had so angry grown  
For Semele, against the Theban strain,  
As she had more than once already shown,  
Then Athamas was stricken so insane  
That he, his very wife encountering,  
Burdened on either hand with children twain,  
Cried out: "Spread we the nets for capturing  
The lioness and whelps upon this ground";  
Then, stretching forth his claws un pitying,  
He took the one Learchus named, and round  
Whirled him, and round, and dasht him on a stone:  
Herself, then, with her other charge, she drowned.  
Again when Fortune had so overthrown  
The arrogance of Trojans all too brave,  
That king and kingdom were alike undone,  
Poor Hecuba, a wretched captive slave,  
When she had looked on dead Polyxena,  
And afterward, beside the ocean wave,  
The body of her Polydorus saw,  
Barked like a dog, out of her senses then;  
So grief had wrung the soul of Hecuba.  
But never furies came to Theban ken,  
Or Trojan, of so much ferocity  
In goading brutes, much less the limbs of men,  
As in two pallid, naked shades saw I,  
Running along and biting in such kind  
As does the boar when loosened from the sty.  
One seized upon Capocchio, and behind  
His neck-joint fixt a fang so murderous  
It made the solid rock his belly grind.  
Said the Aretine, who stood there tremulous:  
"That goblin's Gianni Schicchi, and insane  
He goes about to mangle others thus."

"Oh!" said I, "so the other may refrain  
 From planting fangs in thee, let me persuade  
 Thee tell who 'tis ere it dart hence again."  
 And he to me: "That is the ancient shade  
 Of Myrrha, who in her abandoned mood  
 Illicit love unto her father made.  
 Coming to sin with him, she understood  
 To take an alien form; as who withdrew  
 Yonder, to win the queen mare of the stud,  
 Made bold Buoso Donati to indue  
 In counterfeit presentment, making will  
 And testament in legal order true."  
 And when the rabid pair had passed, who still  
 Had riveted my gaze, I turning eyed  
 The other malefactors starred so ill.  
 One fashioned like a lute I then espied,  
 If only at the groin were amputate  
 The thighs, just at the point where they divide.  
 The heavy dropsy which doth so mismate  
 The limbs with ill-concocted humor thin,  
 That face and loin are disproportionate,  
 Compelled him so to hold his lips atwin  
 As hectics do, for out of thirst he bent  
 Upward the one, the other tow'rd his chin.  
 "O ye exempted from all punishment  
 In this grim world and why I do not know,"—  
 So he began,—“Ah! look and be intent  
 Upon the mode of Master Adam's woe:  
 Living, I had enough of what man wills,  
 And now one drop of water crave below.  
 The rivulets to Arno from the hills  
 Descending through the Casentino green,  
 Cooling and freshening their little rills,  
 Ever and not in vain, by me are seen,  
 Because their image is more withering  
 Than the disease that makes my visage lean.—

*Casentino, beautiful upper valley of the Arno, above Arezzo, shut in by two chains of Apennine and closed at the north by Monte Falterona. See Purgatorio v and xiv. Alvernia, where St. Francis received the stigmata, overlooks the Casentino*



Rigorous Justice with its goading sting,  
 Takes vantage of the very region where  
 I sinned, to give my sighs a nimbler wing.  
 There is Romena, where the coin that bare  
 The Baptist's image did I counterfeit:  
 For which I left my body burnt up there.  
 But could I Alexander's wretched sprite,  
 Or Guido's, or their brothers', down here see,  
 For Fontebranda I would not give the sight.  
 One is already in, if truthful be  
 What the mad shades that circle round me say,  
 But since my limbs are tied, what steads it me?  
 If yet enough of nimbleness had they  
 To carry me an inch a hundred year,  
 Already had I started on the way  
 To seek him 'mid this squalid rabble here,  
 Although eleven miles the round deploy,  
 Nor less than half a mile across appear.  
 Through them in such a family am I:  
 'Twas they who instigated me to stamp  
 The florins with three carats of alloy."  
 "What wretched two," said I, "lie, scamp by scamp  
 Together, hard upon thy right confine,  
 Reeking, like to wet hand in winter's damp?"  
 And he replied: "I found them here supine,  
 When to this trough I rained; they've moved no more  
 Since then, nor ever will they, I opine.  
 She, who false witness against Joseph bore,  
 He, Sinon the false Greek from Troy: intense  
 The fever is that makes them reek so sore."  
 And one of them, who seemed to take offense  
 At being mentioned in a mode so mean,  
 Fisted forthwith his hidebound corpulence,  
 Which rumbled, as it were a tambourine;  
 But Master Adam planted in his face  
 An elbow no less vigorous, I ween,

*The florin had on one side the image of John the Baptist and on the other the Florentine lily. This and the Venetian ducat were the standard gold coins of those ages. As the credit of the Republic depended upon the faith that all the world had in its money, to tamper with the coin amounted to treason*

*Counts of Romena who, being in debt, employed Master Adam, the famous Brescian expert, to debase the florin. The picturesque ruin of Romena, and the nearly dried-up Fontebranda that supplied it with water, are still there. That region and others, which in Dante's time were well-wooded and well-watered, are now denuded of forest and relatively arid*

*In the 9th ditch the circumference is 22 miles (beginning of Canto xxix). The Pit is*

*therefore a rapidly  
narrowing  
funnel, enormously  
wide at  
the top*

Saying to him: "Though I be held in place  
Because of my obesity of loin,  
I have a limber arm for such a case."  
"When going to the stake," did he rejoin,  
"Thou madest not so free with it, perdy;  
But so, and more, when thou wast making coin."  
"Thou sayest true," the dropsied made reply,  
"Thou didst not witness to the truth so well  
When of the truth they questioned there at Troy."  
"Told I false tale, false coinage didst thou tell,"  
Said Sinon, "for one fault am I undone,  
But thou for more than other fiend of Hell."  
"Bethink thee of the horse, thou perjured one,"  
The sinner of inflated belly cries,  
"That the world knows it, be thy malison."  
"Thy malison the thirst that cracks and dries  
Thy tongue," the Greek said, "and the filthy swill  
Which makes that paunch a barrier to thine eyes."  
"Thy mouth is gaping open to thine ill  
As usual," thereon the coiner said,  
"For if I thirst and flux my belly fill,  
Thou hast the fever and the aching head;  
To lap the mirror of Narcissus, few  
The words of invitation thou wouldst need."  
While I was listening absorbed,—  
"Now do  
Go staring on!" the Master said to me,  
"A little more and we shall quarrel too."  
Now when I heard him speak thus angrily,  
I turned me round toward him with such shame  
That still it circles through my memory.  
And even as he who of his harm doth dream,  
And, dreaming, doth to be a dreamer sigh,  
Craving what is, as if it did but seem,  
Such, without power of utterance, grew I:  
Longing to bring, I brought excuses in,  
Yet did not think myself excused thereby.

"Less shame would purge away a greater sin  
Than thine has been," at this the Master cried,  
"Therefore disburden thee of all chagrin;  
And count that I am ever at thy side,  
If it fall out again that Fortune place  
Thee where in such a brabble people bide:  
Because desire to hear the like is base."

## XXXI

## DESCENT: THE GIANTS TOWERING AROUND THE PIT

One selfsame tongue first bit these cheeks of mine,  
Suffusing both of them with bashful blood,  
And then held forth to me the medicine.  
Achilles' lance, as I have understood  
(He had it from his sire), was wonted so  
To give first evil guerdon, and then good.  
We turn our backs upon the vale of woe,  
Up by the bank that girdles it around,  
And without any speech across it go.  
Here less than night and less than day we found,  
Whence little way before my vision went;  
But now I heard a mighty horn resound  
So that it would have made all thunder faint:  
Whence, running counter to it, on one spot  
Mine eyes were turned, and wholly now intent.  
After the dolorous defeat was wrought  
That lost to Charlemagne the blest array,  
A blast so dreadful Roland winded not.  
Not long I held my head bended that way  
When many a lofty tower appeared to rise;  
Whence I: "What is this city, Master, say?"  
And he replied to me: "Because thine eyes  
Traverse the darkness through too wide a space,  
Befalls that fancy wanders in such wise.  
Well shalt thou see, arriving at that place,  
How from afar the sense deceived may be:  
Whence somewhat forward spur thyself apace."  
Taking me by the hand then tenderly,  
"Ere yet," continued he, "we farther go,  
So that the truth appear less strange to thee,  
Not towers are these, but giants, must thou know,  
And in the Pit about the bank are they,  
From the navel downward, one and all below."

As when the mist is vanishing away,  
Little by little through the blotted air  
The gaze shapes out whatever hidden lay:  
So, through the dense and darksome atmosphere  
Piercing, while ever nearer to the bound,  
Forsook I error to encounter fear.  
For, as with circling mural turrets crowned  
Monteregione stands, from the orifice  
Emerged half figures, turreting around  
The margin that encircles the abyss,  
The horrible giants whom Jove from the sky  
Still with his thunder threatens, not amiss.  
I could the face of one by now descry,  
Breast, shoulders, and of belly portion great,  
And either arm depending by the thigh.  
Certainly Nature, ceasing to create  
Such living beings, showed exceeding sense  
These ministers of Mars to abrogate.  
And if of elephant and whale repents  
She nowise, he who subtly looks will find  
Of justice and discretion evidence:  
Because where the equipment of the mind  
Combines with force and malice criminal,  
No bulwark can be made by humankind.  
His face appeared to me as huge and tall  
As is Saint Peter's Pine-cone there at Rome,  
With the other bones in due proportion all:  
So that the bank, which was an apron from  
His middle down, showed upward of his size  
So much that, boasting to his hair to come,  
Three Frisians would have made it good nowise:  
For I beheld of him thirty full palms  
Down from the place where man the mantle ties.  
"Rafel mai amech zabi almi,"  
The mouth ferocious began bellowing,  
To which are not befitting sweeter psalms.

*Monteregione  
still stands, as  
here described,  
a circular tur-  
reted wall sur-  
rounding a vil-  
lage, a few miles  
north of Siena,  
of whose do-  
mains it was  
once a strategic  
point*

*An enormous  
antique cone,  
some ten feet  
high, of gilded  
bronze, now in  
the Garden of  
the Vatican*

To him called out my Leader: "Stupid thing!  
Stick to thy horn; contrive to make it serve  
Thine anger, or whatever passion sting.  
Search at thy neck and there wilt thou observe  
The cord that makes it fast, O soul confused!  
And see the horn thy mighty breast becurve."  
And then to me: "He hath himself accused;  
This one is Nimrod, through whose evil mood  
One language in the world is not still used.  
Leave him, for empty speaking were not good:  
Since every language is to him the same  
As his to others, of none understood."  
We therefore journeyed on, with constant aim  
Toward the left, and at a crossbow shot  
We found one far more fierce and huge of frame.  
The master smith to bind him know I not,  
But he was holding out his left hand bound  
In front of him, the right behind drawn taut  
By a cable chain, which held him so enwound  
From the neck down, that on the part displayed  
As many as five coils begirt him round.  
"This arrogant soul was bent," my Leader said,  
"To try conclusions with almighty Jove,  
Whence in such fashion is his meed repaid.  
His name is Ephialtes; he did prove,  
When giants frightened gods, his force immense:  
The arms he brandisht never will he move."  
And I to him: "I would, if naught prevents,  
That of the measureless Briäurus  
These eyes of mine might have experience."  
"Antæus shalt thou see," he answered thus,  
"Hard by, articulate, unfettered,—he  
To bottom of all bad shall carry us.  
'Tis a far cry to him thou wouldest see;  
Made fast is he, and fashioned like this one,  
Save that his features more ferocious be."

Earthquake aforetime there was surely none  
 Of force to rock a turret as when grim  
 Ephialtes sudden shook himself thereon.  
 I feared death never as I did from him,  
 Nor need had been of more beyond the dread,  
 Had I not seen his gyres on every limb.  
 Farther along we then our footsteps sped,  
 And reached Antæus standing forth ells five  
 Above the rocky verge, without the head.  
 "O thou who sawest the fateful valley give  
 Glory to Scipio, and on that day  
 When Hannibal and his host turned fugitive,  
 Didst bring a thousand lions for thy prey;  
 And through whom, hadst thou with thy brothers  
 been  
 At the high battle, some still seem to say  
 The sons of Earth had won the palm therein:  
 Be not disdainful now to carry us  
 Down where the winter locks Cocytus in.  
 Make us not look to Typhon nor Tityus;  
 This man can give what here ye are craving for:  
 Wherefore stoop down, nor curl thy muzzle thus.  
 He in the world can yet thy fame restore:  
 For still he lives and waits long life, unless  
 Grace call him to herself his time before."  
 The Master thus; and he in eagerness  
 Took up my Leader in those hands outspread  
 Whence Hercules once felt the mighty stress.  
 And when he felt their pressure, Virgil said:  
 "Come hither, that I may enclasp thee quite";  
 Then of himself and me one fardel made.  
 Such as the Carisenda seems to sight  
 Of one beneath its leaning, when a cloud  
 Goes over, and the tower hangs opposite:  
 Just so Antæus seemed to me who stood  
 Watching to see him lean; and it was then  
 I could have wished to go by other road.

*Carisenda (or Garisenda) is one of a pair of leaning towers standing side by side at Bologna. This is 160 feet high; the other, which slants less, 320. Perhaps the Carisenda was once as high as its mate. Dante's choice of this, rather than of the more beautiful and famous tower at Pisa, is one of many reasons for thinking him to have been a student at Bologna. The writer has tested the vividness of the comparison under the slant both*

*of this tower and  
that of Pisa.  
The impression  
is strong that  
the tower is  
falling*

But lightly down he laid us in the fen  
That Lucifer with Judas prisons fast:  
Nor lingered there thus leaning, but again  
Rose up and up, as in a ship the mast.



XXXII

NINTH CIRCLE: CAINA; ANTENORA

Had I such harsh and grating rimes as must  
 Be most in keeping with the dismal Pit  
 Where all the other crags converging thrust,  
 I would press out the juice of my conceit  
 More perfectly: but since 'tis otherwise  
 Not without fear I come to speak of it:  
 Because it is no frolic enterprise  
 To plot the ground of all the universe,  
 Nor for a tongue that *Mama* and *Papa* cries.  
 But be those Ladies helpers in my verse,  
 Who helpt Amphion Thebes to close and keep,  
 That from the fact the word be not diverse.  
 O dwellers in the unrecorded deep,  
 Rabble beyond all others born amiss,  
 Better had ye on earth been goats or sheep!  
 When we were down within the dark abyss  
 Beneath the giant's feet, but far below,  
 And yet I gazed at the high precipice,  
 I heard it said to me: "Look how thou go:  
 Let not thy soles betrample as they pass  
 The heads of weary brothers full of woe."  
 Whereat I turned, and saw there a morass  
 Before and underfoot, and frost thereon  
 Made semblance not of water but of glass.  
 The Austrian Danube never laid upon  
 Her current in the winter, veil so thick,  
 Nor, far beneath the freezing sky, the Don,  
 As here there was: so that if Tambernic  
 Or Pietrapana had tumbled there amain,  
 Not even the border would have given a creak.  
 And even as frogs, that they may croak, remain  
 With muzzle out of water, when in dream  
 The peasant-maiden often gleans again:

*Tall, rocky  
 peaks*

Even so, as far up as where blushes stream,  
 The woeful shades in the ice were pinched and blue,  
 Setting their teeth in tune to the stork's theme.  
 Each one of them held down the face from view,  
 By chattering teeth their chill may be divined,  
 And by the eyes how bitter is their rue.  
 Now, looking round about awhile, I find  
 Down at my feet, two forms so closely pressed  
 The tresses of the head are intertwined.  
 "Tell, ye who thus together strain the breast,"  
 Said I, "who are ye?" And their necks they bent,  
 And when their faces tow'rd me were addressed,  
 Their eyes, whose humor still within was pent,  
 Brimmed over at the lids, whereon the frost  
 Bound fast the tears between, and lockt the vent.  
 No clamp from board to board yet ever crossed  
 That held so firmly: whence, like he-goats twain,  
 Together butted they, in anger lost.  
 One, from whom frostbite both his ears had ta'en,  
 Exclaimed, with visage ever bended down,  
 "Why so to mirror thee in us art fain?"  
 If thou wouldst have these two to thee acknown,  
 The valley whence descends Bisenzio  
 Their father Albert's was, and was their own.  
 They issued from one body; thou mayst go  
 Questing Caïna through, and find no shade  
 Deserving more in gelatine to show:  
 Not him in breast and shadow open laid  
 By one and the same blow from Arthur's hand;  
 Focaccia not; nor him who with his head  
 So hedges me, I can no view command,  
 And who was Sassol Mascheroni hight:  
 If thou be Tuscan, well dost understand.  
 But that no further speeches thou invite,  
 Know, I was Camicion de' Pazzi, and here  
 Expect Carlino to excuse me quite."

*Sons of Count  
 Albert who ruled  
 the Valley of the  
 Bisenzio near  
 Florence, and  
 who killed each  
 other quarreling  
 over the inheri-  
 tance*

*According to the  
 Old French  
 Lancelot, when  
 King Arthur's  
 spear was pulled  
 out of Mordred  
 the sunlight  
 pierced the ori-  
 fice, puncturing,  
 as Dante puts  
 it, the shadow of  
 the body*

Then I beheld a thousand faces leer  
 Curlike with cold: whence shudders o'er me thrill  
 Forevermore, at every frozen mere.  
 While we were going tow'rd the Center still,  
 Whereto all gravity converges down,  
 And I was trembling in the eternal chill:  
 Whether by will, or fate, or fortune done,  
 I know not; but among the heads somehow  
 I struck my foot full in the face of one.  
 Wailing he yelled at me: "Why tramplest thou?  
 Unless to double vengeance for the day  
 Of Montaperti, why molest me now?"  
 And I: "Now, Master, make a little stay,  
 That I through him may rid me of a doubt:  
 Then shalt thou haste me as thou wilt away."  
 My Leader stopt; and I, now turned about  
 To him, still bitterly blaspheming there,  
 Said: "Who art thou on others crying out?"  
 "Nay, who art thou," he answered, "who dost fare  
 Through Antenora, and dost others smite,  
 So that, wert thou alive, 'twere ill to bear?"  
 "Alive I am: if fame be thy delight,  
 It may be dear to thee," did I respond,  
 "That I with other notes thy name indite."  
 "I crave the contrary of those beyond:  
 Begone, and pester me no more," he whined;  
 "Small skill hast thou to flatter on this pond."  
 Then, laying hold upon his scalp behind,  
 "It shall needs be thou name thyself," said I,  
 "Or not a hair upon thee shalt thou find."  
 "What though thou strip me bald," he made reply,  
 "I will not tell thee who I am, nor show,  
 Maul thou my head to all eternity."  
 I had his hair in hand already, so  
 That more than one tuft had been pluckt away,  
 He yelping, with eyes riveted below,

*My kinsman  
 Carlino (a  
 Florentine Bene-  
 dict Arnold) is  
 so much worse  
 that I shall  
 appear inno-  
 cent. The others,  
 —"let us not  
 speak of them"*

*This is Bocca of  
 the Abati, who,  
 at the crucial  
 moment of the  
 battle of Monta-  
 perti, the most  
 cruel defeat  
 Florence suf-  
 fered in the time  
 of the Republic,  
 cut off the hand  
 of the Florentine  
 standard-bearer.  
 To this choice  
 example of  
 traitorhood  
 Dante devotes  
 more than thirty  
 dreadful lines*

When one cried out: "Bocca, what ails thee? nay  
Enough! let jawbones chatter till they burst,  
But must thou bark? what fiend is at thee, pray?"—  
Whereat I said: "Thou traitor thrice accurst,  
From this time forth I want no speech of thee,  
For to thy shame true tale shall be rehearst."  
"Begone, and babble what thou wilt," said he,  
"But, going hence, fail not discourse to hold  
Of him who had the tongue just now so free.  
He is lamenting here the Frenchman's gold:  
'I saw him of Duera,' canst thou note,  
'There where the sinners lie out in the cold.'  
And should they ask thee other anecdote,  
Him at thy side there name in thy reports,  
The Beccheria,—for Florence cut his throat.  
Gianni de' Soldanier, I think, consorts  
With Ganelon, and Tribaldello yon  
Who while men slept unbarred Faenza's ports."  
Already we away from him were gone  
When, frozen in one hole, beheld I two  
So that one head was hood to the other one:  
And even as people bread for hunger chew,  
The uppermost upon the one below  
Set teeth where brain and neck together grew.  
Not otherwise once Tydeus gnawed the brow  
Of Menalippus, in his rage malign,  
Than skull and other parts gnawed this one now.  
"O thou who showest by so bestial sign  
Hatred to him whom thou devourst," said I,  
"Tell me the cause, upon this pledge of mine,  
If thou complainest with good reason why,  
That I, with both acquainted, and his guile,  
May yet requite thee in the world on high,  
If this my tongue be not dried up erewhile."

## XXXIII

## UGOLINO AND HIS CHILDREN IN THE TOWER

That sinner lifted from the foul repast  
His mouth up, wiping it upon the hair  
Behind the head whereon I looked aghast;  
Then he began: "Thou wilt that I declare  
Desperate grief that wrings the heart of me,  
Even in the thought, before I lay it bare.  
But if my words a seed of infamy  
May sow unto the traitor whom I gnaw,  
Speaking and tears together shalt thou see.  
I know not who thou art, nor by what law  
Thou comest down here; but a Florentine,  
On hearing thee, it seemed to me I saw.  
Thou hast to know I was Count Ugolin,  
And this Archbishop Roger: why so fell  
A neighbor am I, let me tell his sin.  
That I, in his good faith confiding well,  
By his devices was in prison flung  
And done to death, there is no need to tell.  
But what thou hast not heard from any tongue,  
That is, how cruelly my life was reft,  
Shall hear, and know if he have done me wrong.  
A narrow cranny in the dungeon cleft  
Whereto for me the name of Famine clings,  
And where to languish others shall be left,  
Had shown me already through its openings  
Many a moon, when the bad dream had I,  
That tore away the veil of coming things.  
This man seemed master of the hunting cry,  
Hounding the wolf and wolfings tow'rd the mount  
That shuts out Lucca from the Pisan eye.  
With eager sleuthhounds gaunt and trained to hunt,  
Had he Gualandi on before him sent,  
Sismondi with Lanfranchi, to the front.

After brief coursing, sire and sons forspent  
    Appeared to me, and all the while they fled  
    I saw their flanks with whetted tushes rent.  
When I awoke before the dawn was red,  
    I heard my children in their slumber cry,  
    For they were with me there, imploring bread.  
Hard must thy heart be, if thou dost not sigh,  
    Only to think of my forebodings drear;  
    What wouldst thou weep for, if thine eyes are dry?  
The hour that used to bring our food drew near,  
    And now they had awakened from their sleep,  
    And each one from his dream was full of fear:  
When I heard, sounding through the horrible keep,  
    The nailing of the doorway: all for woe  
    I gazed into their face in silence deep.  
I wept not,—stony seemed my heart to grow,  
    They wept; and Anselm said, dear little one,  
    ‘Father, what ails thee? Ah, why lookst thou so?’  
Still shed I not a tear, made answer none  
    Through all that day, nor all the following night,  
    Till rose upon the world another sun.  
And when a feeble glimmering of light  
    Was shed into the woeful jail, ah me!  
    And faces four displayed my own to sight,  
I bit on both my hands for agony.  
    And, thinking that I did it under stress  
    Of ravenous hunger, rose they suddenly:  
‘Father,’ they said, ‘our pain will be far less  
    If thou wilt eat of us; thou hast begot  
    This flesh,—relieve us of its wretchedness.’  
This made me calm, lest they be more distraught;  
    That whole day and the next, none made a sign:  
    Ah, cruel earth! why didst thou open not?  
And after the fourth day began to shine,  
    My Gaddo flung him down before my knee,  
    Crying: ‘O why not help me, father mine?’

And there he died: and there I saw the three,  
 As thou seest me, fall one by one all through  
 The fifth and sixth days: whence betook I me,  
 Now blind, to groping on them, and for two  
 Whole days called to them, after they were gone:  
 Then hunger did what sorrow could not do."  
 Having said this, with eyes askance drawn down,  
 That miserable skull he grappled dumb,  
 With teeth strong as a dog's upon the bone.  
 Ah, Pisa! of the folk opprobrium  
 In the fair country where the *si* doth sound,  
 Since neighbors lag in punishment, let come  
 Caprara and Gorgona, shifting ground,  
 And choke up Arno's channel, quite across,  
 That every living soul in thee be drowned.  
 For if folk tax Count Ugolin with loss,  
 By treachery to thee, of places strong,  
 Shouldst not have put his sons on such a cross.  
 Thou modern Thebes! their youth made free from wrong  
 Uguccion and Brigata, and withal  
 The two already mentioned in my song.  
 Yet onward went we, where the icy pall,  
 Rough swathing, doth another people keep,  
 Not downward bended, but reverted all.  
 The very weeping there forbids them weep,  
 And finding on the eyes a barrier, woe  
 Turns inward to make agony more deep:  
 Because the first tears to a cluster grow,  
 And, like a visor crystalline, upfill  
 The whole concavity beneath the brow.  
 And though, as in a callus, through the chill  
 Prevailing there, all sensibility  
 Had ceased its function in my visage, still  
 I felt some wind, so now it seemed to me:  
 "Master, who moveth this?" I therefore said,  
 "Is not all vapor quencht down here?" Whence he:

*Italian was the  
 "lingua di si"  
 (language, orig-  
 inally, of "sic"  
 for "yes") just  
 as Provençal  
 was the "langue  
 d'oc" ("hoc" for  
 "yes"), whence  
 the name of the  
 great region of  
 Languedoc*

*Caprara and  
 Gorgona, islands  
 off the mouth of  
 Arno. Looking  
 down the river  
 from the Leaning  
 Tower on a clear  
 day, they do  
 seem to block the  
 outlet*

"Speedily art thou thither to be led  
 Where shall thine eye to this an answer find,  
 Seeing the cause wherefrom the blast is shed."  
 And of the wretches of the frozen rind  
 One shouted to us: "O ye souls so fell  
 That the last station is to you assigned,  
 Lift from my visage up each rigid veil,  
 That I may vent the sorrow in a trice,  
 Which swells my bosom, ere the tears congeal."  
 "Tell who thou art," I said, "I ask this price:  
 If thee therefore I do not extricate,  
 May I go to the bottom of the ice."

*This gentleman  
 to whom Dante  
 had, by an  
 ambiguous oath,  
 promised a  
 courtesy, had  
 murdered two of  
 his kin at his  
 dinner table, the  
 signal to the  
 assassins being:  
 "Bring in the  
 fruit!" Obviously  
 Dante here acts  
 in harmony with  
 what he con-  
 ceives to be the  
 Divine Justice.  
 Let the betrayer  
 feel in his own  
 person what  
 treachery is like!*

And he: "Frà Alberigo I of late,  
 "He of the fruit of the ill garden: so  
 I here am getting for my fig a date."  
 "Already," said I, "art thou here below?"  
 And he made answer: "How my flesh may thrive  
 There in the upper world, I do not know."  
 This Ptolomea hath such prerogative  
 That oftentimes the soul falls to this place  
 Ere ever Atropos the signal give.  
 And that more willingly from off my face  
 Thou now remove away the glazen tears,  
 Know that as soon as any soul betrays,  
 As I betrayed, forthwith a fiend appears  
 And takes her body, therein governing  
 Throughout the revolution of her years.  
 Headlong to such a cistern doth she fling;  
 And haply still above the trunk is shown  
 Of yonder shade behind me wintering.  
 To thee, if just come down, he should be known:  
 Ser Branca d'Oria: and many a year  
 Since he was thus lockt up, is come and gone."  
 "I think," said I, "that thou deceivst me here:  
 For Branca d'Oria not yet is dead,  
 But eats and drinks and sleeps and dons his gear."



"Into the moat of Maltalons," he said,  
    "Up there where boils the sticky pitch away,  
    Had Michael Zanchè's spirit not yet sped,  
When this one left a devil in full sway  
    In his own body, and one next of blood  
    Who served him as accomplice to betray.  
But now reach here thy hand, as understood,  
    Open mine eyes": my hand I reacht not forth,  
    And courtesy it was to be thus rude.  
Ah, men of Genoa! with aught of worth  
    At variance, and full of vices all,  
    Wherefore are ye not scattered from the earth?  
For with Romagna's soul most criminal  
    I found one such of you, that for his meed  
    His soul bathes in Cocytus, yet withal  
His body seems alive in very deed.

## XXXIV

NINTH CIRCLE: JUDECCA. PASSAGE FROM LUCIFER  
TO THE LIGHT

*"Vexilla Regis  
prodeunt in-  
ferni"*

"Tow'rd us the banner of the King of Hell  
Advances; therefore forward bend thine eyes,"  
My Master said, "if thou discernest well."  
As, when thick fog upon the landscape lies,  
Or when the night darkens our hemisphere,  
A turning windmill seems afar to rise,  
Such edifice, methought, did now appear:  
Whereat, by reason of the wind, I cling  
Behind my Guide,—no other shelter near.  
Already (and it is with fear I sing)  
I found me where the shades all covered show  
Like straws through crystal faintly glimmering.  
Some stand erect, others are prone below;  
One here head up, soles uppermost one there;  
Another face to foot bent, like a bow.  
When we had made our way along to where  
I was to see, as pleased my Master good,  
The Being that once bore the semblance fair,  
He halted me, and from before me stood,  
Saying: "Behold Dis, and the place behold  
Where thou must weapon thee with fortitude!"  
How faint I grew thereat, and icy cold,  
Ask me not, Reader, to declare in speech:  
All language would fall short if it were told.  
Devoid of life, yet death I did not reach:  
Think for thyself, if wit suffice therefor,  
What my condition was, bereft of each.  
He, of the woeful realm the Emperor,  
Emerg'd midbreast above the ice-field yon,  
And liker to a giant I, than bore  
The giants with his arms comparison:  
Consider, with respect to such a limb,  
How huge that whole which it depends upon.

If he were fair once, as he now is grim,  
And raised his brow against That One who made,  
Well may all woe have fountainhead in him.  
O what a wonder, when upon his head  
Three faces to my sight were manifest!  
The one in front, and it was fiery red;  
The other two with this one coalesced  
Just o'er the middle of each shoulder, while  
They all conjoined together at the crest:  
The right-hand face appeared to reconcile  
With yellow, white; the left was such of hue  
As folk who come whence floweth down the Nile.  
Vast wings came forth, beneath each visage two,  
Such as were fitting to a bird like that:  
Sails of the sea so broad I never knew.  
They bore no feathers, but as of a bat  
Their fashion was; and flapping them he stood  
So that three winds proceeded forth thereat,  
Whence frozen over was Cocytus flood.  
The cadent tears were trickling from six eyes  
Over three chins, to mix with drooling blood.  
At every mouth his tushes heckle-wise  
Upon a malefactor champ and tear,  
So that he thus makes three to agonize.  
To him in front the bite could not compare  
Unto the clawing, for at times the hide  
Dilacerated, left the shoulders bare.  
"That soul up yon, most sorely crucified,  
Is Judas the Iscariot," said my Lord,  
"His head within, he plies his legs outside.  
Of the other two, whose heads are netherward,  
Brutus it is who hangs from the black jole:  
Look how he writhes and utters not a word!  
The other Cassius, stalwart-seeming soul.—  
But now another night is darkening;  
We must depart: for we have seen the whole."

About his neck I, at his bidding, cling:

And he of time and place advantage takes:

And soon as wing is wide apart from wing,

Lays hold upon the shaggy flanks, and makés

His way from shag to shag, descending by

The matted hair among the frozen cakes.

When we were come to that point where the thigh

Revolves, exactly where the haunches swell,

My Guide, with effort and distressful sigh,

Turned round his head to where his footing fell,

And like one mounting, grappled to the hair,

So that, methought, we back returned to Hell.

"Keep fast thy hold, because by such a stair,"

The Master said, panting like one forspent,

"Forsaking so great evil, must we fare."

Out through the crevice of a rock he went,

And set me on its brink; then warily

Planting his feet, his steps toward me bent.

I lifted up mine eyes, thinking to see

Lucifer, just as I had seen him last,

And saw him with his legs upturned to me.

And what perplexity now held me fast,

Let dullards fancy who have notion none

What point it was I had already passed.

"Rise up," the Master said, "thy feet upon:

The way is long, and difficult the road,

And now to middle tierce returns the sun."

It was no palace chamber where we stood,

But lo! a natural dungeon vault was this,

Wanting in light and without footing good.

"Before I pluck myself from the Abyss,

Master," when risen to my feet I said,

"Talk with me somewhat, lest I judge amiss.

Where is the ice? and how is This One stayed

Thus upside down and how, in moments few,

The sun from even to morning transit made?"

*Possibly some who are not dullards may be willing to be told that the Point in question was the Center of the Earth, so that we are now under the southern hemisphere. Purgatory, toward which we are climbing, being opposite Jerusalem, we have gained twelve hours of time. It would now be Saturday morning again, so that twenty-four hours are allowed for the passage from the Center to the foot of the mountain of Purgatory. If we can do it at all, we ought to be able to do it in that time, for we are not, as in descending, to make a thousand stops by the way*

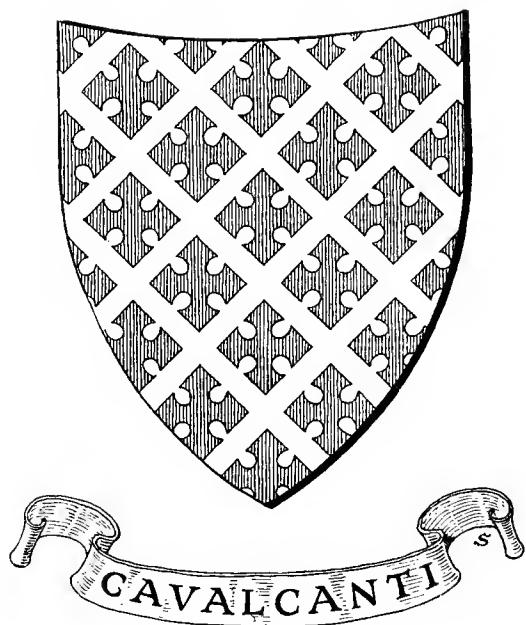
"Thou still believest thee," he said thereto,  
 "Yon-side the Center, where I gript the hair  
 Of the fell Worm that pierces the world through.  
 So long as I descended wast thou there:  
 Soon as I turned, the point we overran  
 Whereto all weights from all directions bear:  
 Thou'rt come beneath the hemisphere whose span  
 Is counterposed to that which doth embrace  
 The great dry land, beneath whose cope the Man  
 Was slain, pure born and without need of grace:  
 Thy feet upon a little disk abide  
 That for Judecca forms the counter face.  
 Here it is morn when yonder eventide:  
 And still doth This One stand as fixedly  
 As ere he made a ladder with his hide.  
 Down out of Heaven upon this side dropt he,  
 And all the land that here of yore arose  
 Was veiled, through terror of him, with the sea,  
 And joined our hemisphere; and some suppose  
 Perhaps that land today on this side found  
 Fled up from him, and left this empty close."  
 There is a place below, whose further bound  
 From Beelzebub far as his tomb extends,  
 By sight unnoted, but betrayed by sound  
 Made by a rivulet that here descends  
 A crannied rock, which it has gnawed away  
 With gently sloping current, as it wends.  
 My Guide and I upon that hidden way  
 Entered, returning to the world of light:  
 And without caring for repose to stay,  
 He first, and I behind him, scaled the height,  
 Till a round opening revealed afar  
 The beauteous things wherewith the heavens are  
 bright:  
 Thence came we forth to re-behold each star.

*The land of the southern hemisphere shrank away from him as he fell, and, after he was planted in the Center, the ground forming the island and mountain of Purgatory fled up from him, leaving that passage open*

*Each Cantica closes with the word "stelle," stars. This the stubborn English rime cannot always manage to the letter*









# PURGATORIO

## I

### THE DAWN OF EASTER

Sets sail the little vessel of my mind  
And henceforth better waters furrowing  
Leaves such a cruel ocean far behind  
And of that Second Kingdom will I sing  
Wherein the human spirit, purged of stain,  
Grows worthy to ascend on heavenward wing.  
Here let dead poesy arise again,  
O holy Muses, since I am your own,  
And here Calliope uplift her strain,  
Companioning my singing with that tone  
Whence the poor Magpies felt so stricken through  
That they were desperate of pardon grown.—  
The tender oriental sapphire hue  
Suffusing the calm heaven from midmost height  
To the first circle down, so pure and blue,  
Cheered up mine eyes with long-unfelt delight  
Soon as I issued forth from the dead blur  
That had afflicted both my heart and sight.  
The planet fair that is Love's comforter  
Lit with her smiling all the eastern skies,  
Veiling the Fishes then escorting her.  
Turning toward the right, I fixed mine eyes  
On the other pole, thereby four stars discerning,  
Ne'er seen by man save first in Paradise.  
The heaven appeared enraptured with their burning:  
Clime of the northland, O how widowed thou,  
Since these have been withholden from thy yearning!  
When from their view I could avert my brow,  
Glancing a little toward the north, that shone  
Where the bright Wain had sunk from sight ere now,

*Scene: An island in the Southern Ocean, at foot of a loftier Teneriffe*

*Time: The action begins before dawn Easter Sunday, A.D. 1300*

*Characters: All, save the pilgrim-poet, shades of the dead*

*Virgil and Dante appear on the plain sloping from sea-shore to mountain-cliff*

*As he is facing toward the dawn-star, the four symbolic stars are near the South Pole. These "sacred stars" which appear again in Canto xxxi probably symbolize the four Pagan or Cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance*

*The shade of  
Cato of Utica,  
warden of this  
region outside of  
Purgatory. Ex-  
amples of other  
just Pagans,  
who appear  
among the re-  
deemed, are  
given in Para-  
diso xx*

Near me appeared an elder all alone,  
 Worthy of so great reverence by his mien  
 That more to father owes not any son.  
 Long was his beard, with grizzled streaks between,  
 And like thereto the crown of hair he wore  
 Fell to his breast in double tresses sheen.  
 Beams of the holy luminaries four  
 Adorned his face and so great luster shed,  
 I saw him as though the sun had been before.  
 "Who are ye, against the darkling river fled  
 From out the eternal prison void of day?"—  
 Moving those venerable plumes, he said.  
 "Who was your lantern or who led the way  
 Issuing forth from the abysmal gloom  
 That makes the infernal valley black for aye?  
 Are broken thus below the laws of doom?  
 Or has in Heaven gone forth some new decree  
 That ye, being damned, to my rock-caverns come?"  
 Straightway my Leader laid his hold on me,  
 And what with word and hand and signal, brought  
 To posture reverent my brow and knee;  
 And then replied: "Of myself came I not:  
 A Lady has descended from the sky,  
 And I assist this man as she besought.  
 But seeing that thy questions signify  
 The will for further truth about us twain,  
 I could not find it in me to deny.  
 This man saw not his final evening wane,  
 But by his folly was so near thereto  
 That little time was left to turn again.  
 I was sent thither where he lay perdue  
 In rescue, as I said, nor was there road  
 But this which I am striving to pursue.  
 To him all circles of the lost I showed;  
 And now I am intending to display  
 Those spirits who are purged beneath thy code.

How I have brought him would be long to say:  
 Comes Virtue from aloft, enabling me  
 To give him sight and speech of thee today.  
 Now look upon his coming graciously;  
 He goes in quest of freedom, boon how dear  
 Knows that man who with life has paid her fee.  
 Thou knowest it, for death did not appear  
 Bitter to thee in Utica, there leaving  
 The vesture that great day to be so clear.  
 No law eternal by our act is cleaving,  
 For this man lives, nor Minos is my lord;  
 But I am of the circle where are grieving  
 Marcia's pure eyes, as though they still implored  
 That thou wouldst hold her thine, O holy breast:  
 For her love, then, thy grace to us accord.  
 Let us throughout thy seven kingdoms quest:  
 Thee by report to her will I requite,  
 If word of thee below thou sanctionest."—  
 "Marcia was aye so winsome in my sight  
 Long as I tarried yonder," he replied,  
 "That doing all her will was my delight.  
 Now can she, from beyond the baleful tide,  
 Move me no more, by law which took effect  
 When I passed over from the further side.  
 But if a Lady of Heaven prompt and direct  
 As thou hast said, thy bland persuasion hush,  
 Sufficient answer for her sake expect.  
 Go then and see that with a simple rush  
 Thou gird this mortal, washing in such wise  
 His face that for no soilure it may blush:  
 For it were unbecoming that with eyes  
 Beclouded, he appear before the Prime  
 Angel who is of those of Paradise.  
 This islet, ere the slope begins to climb,  
 About the margin where the billow heaves,  
 Is fringed with rushes in the oozy slime.

*Symbolic cleansing and girding of Dante. The reed is symbol of humility: Dante's besetting sin, as we shall see, is pride*

No other plant, of such as put forth leaves  
     Or harden, could survive there, since not bent  
     To every buffet that the stalk receives.  
 Put all returning here from your intent;  
     The sun, now rising, will instruct you how  
     To take the Mount by easier gradient."—  
 So vanisht he; and I, uprising now  
     Without a word, and firmly taking stand  
     Close to my Leader, bent on him my brow.  
 "Follow my footsteps, son," was his command,  
     "Let us turn backward, for from here this lea  
     Slopes to the lower limit of the land."—  
 Now did the shadowy hour of morning flee  
     Before the dawn, so that from far away  
     I caught the gusty ripple of the sea.  
 We walked the lonely plain as wander they  
     Who turn back to the pathway lost, and who  
     Until they find it seem to go astray.  
 When we had reached that region low where dew  
     Contentds with sun, nor in the chilly air  
     Disperses while the beams are faint and few,  
 Softly upon the tender herbage there  
     Both of his outspread palms my Master placed;  
     Whence I, who of his purpose was aware,  
 Lifted my grimy cheeks, with tear-stains laced;  
     There to my features he restored that hue  
     Which by the spume of Hell had been effaced.  
 Then to the lonely seashore came we two,  
     Which never yet upon its waters found  
     One mariner who afterward withdrew.  
 Here as that other bade, he girt me round:  
     O miracle! that such as from the earth  
     He culled the humble plant, quick from the ground  
 Whence it was pluckt, it came again to birth.

*Cf. the fate of  
 Ulysses, Inf.*  
 xxvi

II

THE ANGEL PILOT

The sun by now to that horizon came  
 The arc of whose meridian is at height  
 Just at the point above Jerusalem:  
 And, circling opposite to him, the Night  
 Was issuing forth from Ganges with the Scales  
 Which fail her hand when she exceeds in might;  
 So, where I was, the cheek that glows and pales  
 Of fair Aurora, sallowed with the ray  
 Of orange, because age on her prevails.  
 Beside the sea we pondered on the way  
 Like folk who, lingering still along the shore,  
 Hasten in heart and in the body stay;  
 And as, a little while the dawn before,  
 Mars reddens through the vapor baleful-bright  
 Low in the west above the ocean-floor,  
 I saw, — O may it bless again my sight! —  
 A luster coming on across the main  
 With speed unparalleled by any flight.  
 And when I let mine eye awhile remain  
 Detached from it, to question of my Guide,  
 Larger and brighter now it showed again.  
 Then there emerged to view on either side  
 A whiteness indistinct, and down below  
 Little by little another I descried.  
 My Master uttered not a word, till lo!  
 The first white spots appeared as wings to shine,  
 Then, when he surely did the Pilot know,  
 He cried: "Make haste, make haste, the knee incline,  
 Fold hands, — it is God's Angel! thou shalt use  
 Henceforth to see such ministers divine.  
 Look, how doth he all human means refuse,  
 Scorning device of sail or oar, nor drew  
 Aught but his wings upon so far a cruise;

*Contrast the  
 opening of Inf.  
 ii*

*The sun is  
 rising here at  
 Purgatory, night  
 is falling at  
 Jerusalem, it is  
 midnight on the  
 Ganges. Cf. the  
 diagram, Tem-  
 ple Primer of  
 Dante, p. 147.  
 And cf. the be-  
 ginning of  
 Canto xxvii*

Look, look how heavenward he holds them true,  
 Fanning the welkin with those plumes eterne  
 Which do not molt as mortal feathers do!"—  
 Then, near and nearer come, might I discern  
 The Bird of God more dazzling than before,  
 Until mine eyes that with the blaze now burn  
 Fall down undone. But he drew near the shore  
 On pinnace light and rapid, — such an one  
 The water swallowed nothing of the prore.  
 Astern the Pilot stood, and benison  
 Celestial showed upon his face devout:  
 A hundred and more spirits sat thereon.

*Psalm 114. This passage refers, says Dante, by allegory to Redemption, morally to Conversion, anagogically to the departure from earthly slavery to eternal freedom. Cf. letter to Can Grande, § 7*

*The Ram being with the Sun on the horizon, the Sky-goat will be in the Zenith*

"When Israel from Egypt issued out,"  
 They chanted as with single voice the lay,  
 With what there afterward the Psalmist wrote.  
 When sign of holy cross he made them, they  
 Flung themselves one and all upon the strand,  
 And swiftly as he came he swept away.  
 There huddled they together close at hand  
 Gazing about, like strangers to the place  
 Endeavoring new things to understand.  
 The sun was shedding everywhere his rays,  
 And with the arrows of his radiance now  
 Did Capricorn from middle-heaven chase,  
 When the new people lifted up their brow  
 Toward us, saying: "If expert ye be  
 In faring up the Mountain, show us how."—  
 And Virgil said: "Ye deem perchance that we  
 Have some experience to guide us here,  
 But we are also pilgrims as are ye.  
 We came before you, and not long whilere,  
 By road so rough and hard that the ascent  
 But sport henceforward will to us appear."—  
 The spirits, among whom the whisper went  
 That I was still a living and breathing one,  
 Turned deadly pale for very wonderment.

And as, to hear good tidings, people run  
     To reach the olive-bearing messenger,  
     And not a man appears the throng to shun,  
 So one and all the happy spirits there  
     Fastened upon me hungrily their view,  
     As if forgot the quest to make them fair.  
 And I saw one of them who forward drew  
     To my embrace with love so manifest  
     That I was influenced the like to do.  
 O insubstantial souls in shadowy vest!  
     Thrice did I clasp my hands behind that shade  
     And drew them back as often to my breast.  
 Wonder, I think, was on my face portrayed;  
     Whereat it only smiled and drew away  
     While I pursued in hopes it would have stayed.  
 In mellow tones he gently said me nay,  
     And knowing him thereby, did I implore  
     That he for speech a little while would stay.  
 "As loved I in the mortal flesh of yore,  
     So loosed I love thee still," he answered clear,  
     "I stay then; but why papest thou the shore?"—  
 "To this place where we are, Casella dear,  
     To come once more I make this pilgrimage;  
     But why is so much time bereft thee here?"—  
 And he: "No injury can I allege,  
     If he who takes up when and whom he please  
     Somewhile denied to me the ferriage,  
 For of right will his own is made. Yet these  
     Three happy months accepts he verily  
     Whoever longs to enter, with all peace;  
 Whence I, who had just now betaken me  
     Where Tiber water savors of the brine,  
     Have been received by him benignantly.  
 That is the goal where now his wings incline;  
     For at that outlet ever gathers what  
     Falls not perdue to punishment condign."—

*Of this friend  
 Casella, whom  
 Dante "met in  
 the milder  
 shades of Pur-  
 gatory," little is  
 known more  
 than what the  
 Poet here tells  
 Three months  
 since Christmas  
 when the Jubilee  
 Year of peace  
 and pardon had  
 begun*

And I: "If novel law abolish not  
 Practice or memory of the song of love  
 That used to solace all my yearning thought,  
 I pray thee grace me with the comfort of \*  
 Thy song, for in the body traveling  
 So far, my heart is weary here above."—

*The first line of  
 that canzone  
 which Dante  
 analyzes in his  
 Convivio, Third  
 Treatise*

"Love, deep within the spirit reasoning,"  
 So sweetly he began to sing it thus  
 That still the dulcet tones within me ring.  
 My Master and I and that unanimous  
 Company with him drew such rapture thence  
 As if no other care encumbered us.  
 Still hung we on that music in suspense,  
 When lo! that stately elder: "Laggard crew  
 Of spirits, what portends this negligence?  
 Think what, delaying, ye neglect to do!  
 Speed to the Mount to slough the film," he cried,  
 "That lets not God be manifest to you."—  
 As pigeons that are feeding side by side  
 And pecking at the darnel or the ear,  
 Quiet and strutting not with wonted pride,  
 If aught whereof they are afraid appear  
 All of a sudden let alone their food  
 Because of being assailed by greater care,  
 So, saw I that newly-landed multitude  
 Forsake the song and scurry tow'rd the height  
 Like them who go but wot not where they would:  
 Nor any less precipitate our flight.



III

ANTEPURGATORY

While sudden flight was all dispersing thus  
 That flock of spirits through the countryside  
 Toward the Mount where reason searches us,  
 I drew up close to my Companion tried;  
 And how without him had I kept the course?  
 Who up the mountain would have been my guide?  
 He seemed to me disturbed with self-remorse:  
 O soul of honor, tender conscience good,  
 How little fault to have such bitter force!  
 After his feet the hurry had subdued,  
 That of all action mars the dignity,  
 My mind, which hitherto in durance stood,  
 Eagerly rendered its attention free;  
 Then turned my sight toward the Hill, supreme  
 Of peaks emerging skyward from the sea.  
 Behind us flamed the Sun, whose ruddy gleam  
 Before me broke in the configuration  
 Formed on me by the stopping of its beam.  
 I turned, in terror of abandonment  
 Sidewise and half around, become aware  
 The ground was shadowed only where I went.  
 Then turning round to me, my Comforter  
 Began: "Why givest thou suspicion room?  
 Dost thou not think I, guiding, with thee fare?  
 Already it is evening at the tomb  
 Where lies the body of me that cast a shade:  
 Naples received it from Brundusium.  
 Now if no shadow is before me made,  
 Like wonder in the heavens dost thou behold,  
 Whose rays are not by one another stayed.  
 The Power who will his workings not unfold  
 Makes bodies apt to suffer, as we do,  
 Torments arising both from heat and cold.

*Dante for the  
 first time sees  
 his shadow*

One Substance, in Three Persons, travels through  
 Illimitable ways, where it were wild  
 To deem that human reason might pursue.

Be to the fact, O mortals, reconciled,  
 For, had ye power to see all things and learn,  
 No need had been for Mary to bear child.

And ye have seen without fulfillment yearn  
 Those whose desire would have been satisfied,  
 Which now is given to them for grief eterne.

Of Aristotle and Plato I speak, — beside  
 Many another."—Here his brow he bent,  
 Deeply perturbed, and further speech denied.

Meanwhile toward the mountain-foot we went:  
 A cliff so steep that nimble legs would be  
 Of small avail attempting such ascent.

The way between Turbía and Lerici  
 Most lonely and deserted were a stair,  
 Compared with that, accessible and free.

"Where slopes the mountain, who can tell me where,"  
 The Master murmured, staying his advance,  
 "So that the wingless foot may clamber there?"—

And while he, casting down his countenance,  
 Was questioning his mind about the way,  
 And up along the rock I ran my glance,

Behold, off to the leftward, an array  
 Of spirits all in our direction bound,  
 Though seeming not, so slow of pace were they.

"Lift up thine eyes, good Master, and look round,"—  
 Said I, "some who may help are coming yon,  
 If yet thy wisdom at a loss be found."—

We moved along a thousand steps or so,  
 Finding that company as far by this  
 As a good thrower with his hand could throw,

When at the foot of the high precipice  
 Gathered they all, compact and circumspect,  
 Gazing like men who fear to go amiss.

*The Riviera  
 from Turbía  
 (near Nice) to  
 the Gulf of  
 Spezia was  
 traversed by a  
 mountain-path*

"O ye who ended well, O souls elect!"  
 Virgil began, "in name of that sublime  
 Peace which, I think, ye one and all expect,  
 Tell us if it be possible to climb  
 The Mountain somewhere by a slope less bold:  
 For irksome to the wise is loss of time."—  
 As sheep are wont to issue from the fold  
 By one and two and three, the rest pursue  
 Meekly, and eye and muzzle downward hold,  
 And what the first one does the others do,  
 And if she stop all huddle at her side,  
 Nor question why, the quiet silly crew:  
 So moving now toward us I descried  
 The column-leaders of that happy flock,  
 Modest in face, in action dignified.  
 When those in front beheld my body block  
 The light upon my dexter hand, whereby  
 The shadow stretched from me toward the rock,  
 They halted and withdrew somewhat more nigh  
 Those following behind, and all the rest  
 Did in like manner, without knowing why.  
 "I frankly tell you, without your request,  
 This is a human body that ye see,  
 As by the broken light is manifest.  
 Then do not wonder, but persuaded be  
 That not by heavenly Power unwarranted  
 To mount this barrier endeavors he."—  
 The Master thus; and that good people said:  
 "Then turn about and enter in before,"  
 And with the backs of hands the signal made.  
 "Whoever thou mayst be," did one implore,  
 "While pressing forward, hither turn anew:  
 Consider if thou sawst me there of yore."—  
 I turned to scan him, and there met my view  
 Fair features and of gentle mien and blond,  
 Although one eyebrow had been cloven through.

*By the shadow  
 knowing Dante  
 to be in the body*

*The pregnant  
 and pathetic  
 lines that follow  
 deal with the  
 treatment of the  
 last Hohenstau-  
 fen who reigned  
 in Italy by Pope  
 Clement IV, ob-*

*sequious to the conqueror. To feel its full significance the reader should know much more of the facts, both political and ecclesiastical, than can be told in a note*

And when I ventured humbly to respond  
 With a denial, "Look!" — and he laid bare  
 Above his breast a sanguinary wound.  
 "Manfred am I," said he with smiling air,  
 "Grandson of Empress Constance: whence I pray  
 Thee go, returning, to my daughter fair,  
 Mother of both the monarchs who bear sway,  
 One in Sicilia, one in Aragon,  
 And tell her truth, whatever else they say.  
 When these two mortal stabs had quite undone  
 My body, yielded I with tears contrite  
 To Him who willingly gives benison.  
 Horrible were my sins, but Infinite  
 Bounty has arms of an embrace so broad  
 That it accepts whoever turn to it.  
 And if Cosenza's Pastor, who at nod  
 Of Clement went to hunt me down, had known  
 How to peruse aright this page in God,  
 Even now were of my body every bone  
 At the bridgehead near Benevento trenched,  
 Beneath the safeguard of the heavy stone.  
 Now scattered by the wind, by the rain drenched,  
 Beyond the kingdom hard by Verde's flow,  
 Whither he carried them with tapers quenched.  
 By curse of theirs no soul can perish so  
 But that Eternal Love for them may bloom  
 While hope one particle of green can show.  
 True is that such as die beneath the doom  
 Of Holy Church, though they at last repent,  
 Must here outside the precipice find room,  
 Full thirtyfold the time that they have spent  
 In their presumption, if to briefer span  
 Good prayers do not reduce such banishment.  
 Hereafter pray rejoice me, if thou can,  
 Revealing to my gracious Constance dear  
 How thou hast seen me and alas! this ban:  
 For much those yonder may advance us here."—

*Treating the body as that of an excommunicated ruler*

IV

THE ASCENT OF THE MOUNTAIN BEGUN

When an impression of delight or dole  
 Works on some faculty of ours, and thus  
 Wholly that faculty absorbs the soul,  
 It seems of other force oblivious;  
 And this is counter to that erring thought  
 Which would enkindle soul on soul in us.  
 Therefore, when hearing or when seeing aught  
 That draws the soul's attention potently,  
 Time passes by, and one perceives it not;  
 For that which notes it is one faculty,  
 Another that which holds the soul intent:  
 This is preoccupied, and that is free.  
 Hereof I made a true experiment  
 Listening in wonder to that spirit fair;  
 For now the Sun had fully made ascent  
 Fifty degrees, and I was not aware,  
 When came we where those spirits to us cried  
 With one accord: "Look, your desire is there!"—  
 The hedger oft an opening more wide  
 Blocks with a forkful of his brambles, when  
 Toward the vintage grapes are purple-dyed,  
 Than was the passage where ascended then  
 My Leader and I after, we alone,  
 While all that flock of souls were lost to ken.  
 You mount San Leo, drop to Noli down,  
 And of Bismantova you scale the height  
 With only feet; but here must wings be grown,—  
 I mean swift pinions that are fledged for flight  
 With great desire, behind that Leader, who  
 Was giving me hope and holding out a light.  
 Hemmed in on either hand we mounted through  
 The cloven rock; the ground whereon we trode  
 Made work enough for feet and hands to do.

*The Timæus of  
 Plato expounds  
 the theory of a  
 mortal and an  
 immortal soul  
 in man*

*So that it is now  
 about nine  
 o'clock*

*So he does in  
 Italy today*

When at the verge of the high bank we stood  
     Aloft upon the open mountainside,  
     I asked: "Which way pursue we, Master good?"—  
 "Be wary of thy foothold," he replied;  
     "Win with me up the mountain till we find  
     One who may prove to be a skillful guide."—  
 So soared the peak, it left the sight behind,  
     And steeper far the slope than line away  
     From middle quadrant unto center inclined.  
 Weary was I when I began to pray:  
     "Dear Father, O turn hitherward and see  
     How I am left alone unless thou stay!"—  
 "My son, draw up as far as here," said He,  
     Pointing me to a ledge just overhead  
     Circling on that side all the acclivity.  
 So sharply spurred me on the words he said,  
     That I crept after him with might and main  
     Until the terrace was beneath my tread.  
 There to sit down awhile we both were fain,  
     Facing the East whence we had made ascent;  
     For, looking back, a man takes heart again.  
 Mine eyes at first to the low shores were bent,  
     Thereafter lifted to the Sun, whose glow  
     Struck us from leftward, to my wonderment.  
 The Poet well perceived me gazing so  
     Upon the Car of Light with wonder, where  
     It entered between us and Aquilo.  
 Whence he: "If Castor and if Pollux were  
     Companions with that mirror which sheds back  
     The light divine to either hemisphere,  
 Thou wouldst behold him blaze in Zodiac,  
     Unto the Bears revolving still more nigh,  
     Unless the sun should quit his ancient track.  
 If thou wouldst understand the reason why,  
     With centered thought imagine Zion-hill  
     On earth set over against this mountain high,

*More than 45°*

*Looking east-  
ward in the  
southern  
hemisphere*

So that they both have one horizon still  
 And hemispheres diverse; then wilt thou see,  
 If to take heed thine intellect have skill,  
 How the highway that Phaëton, ah me!  
 Knew not to course, must pass upon that side  
 This mountain, and this side of Zion be."—  
 "Truly, my Master, never yet," I cried,  
 "Saw I so clearly as I now discern,  
 Since of the mark my wit seemed ever wide,  
 That the mid-circle of the heaven supern,  
 Equator in a certain science known,  
 And which doth still 'twixt sun and winter turn,  
 Is distant, for the reason thou hast shown,  
 Northward from here as far as once the Jews  
 Beheld it looking tow'rd the torrid zone.  
 But if it please thee well, I fain would choose  
 To know how far we clamber; for so high  
 Rises the Hill, that sight in vain pursues."—  
 "This mountain slope is such," he made reply,  
 "That low beginnings ever painful seem;  
 The toil decreases climbing tow'rd the sky.  
 But when it comes about that thou shalt deem  
 Climbing as easy as to ship and crew  
 Seems gliding with the current down the stream,  
 Then is the end of this hard road in view;  
 There may thy weary limbs expect repose;  
 More I reply not, knowing this for true."—  
 No sooner had he said such words as those,  
 Than sounded out a voice near by: "Perchance  
 He'll have to sit before so far he goes!"—  
 Both of us, turning at this utterance,  
 Saw at the left a stone of massive size  
 Which neither had perceived at the first glance.  
 Thither we drew apace, till met our eyes  
 Persons behind the rock, with shadow blent,  
 Lying along as one in idlesse lies.

*Jerusalem is  
 conceived as at  
 the antipodes of  
 Purgatory. The  
 course of the sun  
 must therefore be  
 north of Purga-  
 tory and south  
 of Jerusalem.  
 See the begin-  
 ning of Canto ii*

And one of them, who seemed to me forspent,  
 Was sitting, and was clasping both his knees,  
 Holding his face deep down between them bent.

"Look, Master mine," said I, "if one of these  
 Seems not more overcome with lassitude  
 Than if his sister had been slothful Ease."—

At this he bent to us, and understood,  
 Moving his visage up along his thigh,  
 And said: "Now up, for thou hast hardihood!"—

Then showed he features that I knew him by,  
 And my still panting breath impeded not  
 My going to him; and as soon as I

Had reached him, he uplifted but a jot  
 His brow, and murmured: "Seest thou how the Sun  
 O'er thy left shoulder drives his chariot?"—

His lazy mien and phrase compactly spun  
 Relaxed my lips to show a little glee;  
 "Belacqua," I began, "from this time on

I grieve no more for thee; but answer me,  
 Why sitst thou here? Awaitest thou a Guide?  
 Or has thy wonted mood recaptured thee?"—

"Brother, what use in climbing?" he replied;  
 "The Bird of God, at threshold of the gate,  
 Would not admit me to be purified.

First Heaven must needs as often circulate  
 Round me outside, as it in life had done,  
 Since I delayed repentance till too late;

If earlier aid me not some orison  
 Breathed forth from soul with living grace at core;  
 What boot is other prayer, unheard up yon?"—

Already went the Poet up before,  
 Saying: "Come on now: look, the Sun is bright  
 On the meridian, and at the shore  
 Morocco lies beneath the foot of Night."—

*The soul of  
 Belacqua (Fair-  
 water), an old  
 friend of  
 Dante's, who,  
 though indolent  
 of temperament,  
 has the charac-  
 teristic Floren-  
 tine shrewdness  
 of wit*

*It is noon in  
 Purgatory;  
 therefore the  
 other hemi-  
 sphere, from the  
 Ganges to  
 Morocco, is in  
 darkness,—the  
 night just begin-  
 ning in Morocco*



V

TRAGIC DEATHS OF THREE NOBLE SOULS

Now from those shades departing, I betook  
 Myself my Leader's footmarks to pursue,  
 When one behind me, pointing, shouted: "Look,  
 The sunbeam seems not to be shining through  
 Leftward from him below; and more by token  
 He seems to bear him as the living do!"—  
 I turned about to look when this was spoken,  
 And saw them gaze at me for marvel—yea  
 At me, and at the sunbeam that was broken.  
 "Why is thy mind diverted from the way  
 To make thee loiter?" said my Master kind;  
 "What carest thou up here how whisper they?  
 Come after me and let them speak their mind;  
 Stand like a tower unwavering and stout  
 Against whatever buffets of the wind.  
 For he who thinks about it and about  
 Falls short, forever thwarted of his aim,  
 Since one thought by the next is canceled out."  
 I said, "I come!"—how answer else for shame?  
 And said it with that flush which may restore us  
 To pardon, if we worthily lay claim.  
 Behold now people who, short way before us  
 Across the Mountain passing, as they go  
 Sing *Miserere* verse about in chorus.  
 Seeing my body interrupt the flow  
 Of sunlight, and enshadowing the plain,  
 They changed the singing to a long hoarse *Oh!*  
 And in the form of messengers came twain  
 Running toward us from that multitude,  
 Desiring knowledge of our state to gain.  
 "Ye can go back," replied my Master good,  
 "To those who sent you forth, and certify  
 That this man's body is true flesh and blood.

*A lower slope of  
 the mountain.  
 Early afternoon  
 of the first day*

*Implying, per-  
 haps, that these  
 souls had neg-  
 lected action  
 through "some  
 craven scruple of  
 thinking too pre-  
 cisely on the  
 event"*

And if to see his shadow made them shy  
     As I suppose, let this reply suffice:  
     Him let them honor, profiting thereby."—  
 So swift-enkindled vapors to mine eyes  
     Never the sunset clouds of August clove  
     Nor flasht at fall of night across the skies,  
 But these in briefer time returned above;  
     And, there arrived, with the others tow'rd us wheeled  
     Like squadron without rein that forward drove.  
 "Many are these who crowd on us afield,"  
     The Poet said, "to make thee one request;  
     Yet go right on and, going, hearing yield."—  
 "O pilgrim soul who goest to be blest  
     With those limbs fashioned in thy mother's mold,  
     Stay but a moment!"—cried they as they pressed.  
 "Look if thou sawest one of us of old,  
     That thou to earth mayst tidings of him bear:  
     Pray why dost thou go on? pray why not hold?  
 We all were slain by violence whilere,  
     And sinners till the final hour of grace;  
     Then light from Heaven made us so well aware  
 That, penitent and pardoning, apace  
     We quitted life at peace with the Most High,  
     Who heartens us with yearning for his face."—  
 "Although I scan your lineaments," said I,  
     "Not one do I recall; but pray ye speak,  
     If aught to please you in my power there lie,  
 And I will do it, happy spirits meek,  
     By hope of peace which, following up the Hill  
     Behind such Guide, from world to world I seek."—  
 And one began: "We all are trusting still  
     In thy good service, nor need oath attest,  
     If only weakness do not cancel will;  
 Whence I, who speak alone before the rest,—  
     If thou shalt look upon that land one day,  
     Between Romagna and that of Charles,—request

*Jacopo del Cas-  
 saro, a distin-  
 guished noble-  
 man of Fano,  
 waylaid near  
 Padua by assas-  
 sins in the pay  
 of Marquis  
 Azzo, lord of  
 Ferrara*

That thou of courtesy for me wilt pray  
 In Fano, so that there be orisons  
 To help me purge my heavy sins away.  
 Thence came I; but the gashes wherethrough once  
 Issued the blood wherein I had my seat,  
 Were dealt to me among Antenor's sons,  
 There where I fancied safest my retreat:  
 The Este had it done, who held me then  
 In anger more by far than justly meet.  
 But had I fled toward La Mira, when  
 At Oriaco by pursuers found,  
 Still were I yonder among breathing men.  
 I ran to the marsh; the mud and reeds around  
 So hampered me I fell, and there saw I  
 My blood become a pool upon the ground."—  
 "Ah, by that yearning," did another sigh,  
 "Whereby to the High Mountain drawest thou,  
 Do thou aid mine with pious sympathy.  
 I was of Montefeltro, merely now  
 Buonconte; heeds me none, not even Joan,  
 Whence among these I go with downcast brow."—  
 And I: "From Campaldino lost alone  
 By chance wast thou, or violence malign,  
 So that thy burial place was never known?"—  
 "Oh," said he, "runs athwart the Casentine  
 A stream called Archiano, rising o'er  
 The Hermitage, aloft in Apennine.  
 There where it answers to that name no more  
 Came I with throat empierced, as I fled  
 On foot along the plain, marked with my gore.  
 There eyesight failed me, and the prayer I said  
 Paused on the name of Mary; there I fell,  
 And there my flesh remained untenanted.  
 The truth I speak among the living tell:  
 God's Angel took me: 'Why wilt thou be stealing  
 Mine own, thou son of Heaven?' cried he of Hell;

*Buonconte da Montefeltro, son of the renowned captain who speaks in Inf. xxvii. Dante himself fought in this battle of Campaldino (1289) The contrast between the story of the son and that of the father is marked with artistic intention*

'With his immortal art thou skyward wheeling;  
 That part I forfeit for one little tear;  
 But with the other use I other dealing.'—  
 Thou knowest how gathers in the atmosphere  
 That vaporous moisture, soon to water turning  
 By the chill pressure of the upper sphere.  
 That Evil Will, for evil only yearning,  
 Endowed with native power intelligent,  
 Joined and moved cloud and wind with fell discerning.  
 Thereafter, when the day was fully spent,  
 From Pratomagno to the Great Yoke fills  
 With fog the valley and veils the firmament  
 And into water the teeming air distills;  
 Down through the gullies comes the fallen rain,—  
 All thirsty earth could drink not,—and the rills  
 Into great torrents gathering amain,  
 Headlong toward the royal river bore  
 With such a rush that weir and dike were vain.  
 Wild Archiano found my body froze  
 Hard by his outlet, sweeping it inert  
 Into the Arno, and from my bosom tore  
 The cross I made me, conquered by the hurt;  
 Whelmed me along by many a bank and shoal,  
 Then with his shingle covered me and girt."—  
 "Ah, when thou turnest to an earthly goal,  
 And shalt have rested from the weary way,"—  
 The second ceasing, followed a third soul,—  
 "Remember me, who am Pia, when thou pray;  
 Siena made me, by Maremma undone:  
 He knows who ringed me, ringless till that day,  
 Espousing me with gem and benison."—

*Pia, of the great  
 house of the  
 Tolomei, flung  
 by a faithless  
 husband from  
 his castle-crag  
 in the wilds of  
 the Tuscan  
 Maremma*

## VI

## DANTE THE "STORMY VOICE" OF ITALY

When breaks the game of hazard, he who lost  
 Remains behind in sorrow, and essays  
 The throws again, thus learning to his cost;  
 With the winner all the others go their ways:  
 One in advance, one plucks him from the rear,  
 And for reminder one beside him stays.  
 He hastens,—all soliciting his ear,—  
 His hand goes out to some, who leave him free,—  
 And from the pressure of the crowd gets clear.  
 So I, amid that thronging company,  
 Was turning to them here and there my face,  
 And making promise, extricated me.  
 The Aretine who in the grim embrace  
 Of Ghin di Tacco perisht, with them stood,  
 And the other who was drowned while giving chase.  
 There prayed, with hands in suppliant attitude,  
 Frederick Novello, and that Pisan son  
 Who proved the good Marzucco's fortitude.  
 I saw Count Orso, and the soul of one  
 Bereft of life by spite, as he averred,  
 And envy, not for any trespass done,—  
 Pier de la Brosse, I mean: and by this word  
 Be warned the Dame of Brabant to take heed  
 Lest she for this consort with baser herd.  
 As soon as I was from these shadows freed,  
 Whose one prayer was that other prayer benign  
 Them on the way to holiness might speed,  
 Thus I began: "It seems, O light of mine,  
 In one text thou expressly questionest  
 That orison may bend decree divine;  
 And yet these people only this request:  
 Can it be possible their hope is vain?  
 Or is to me thy word not manifest?"—

*First day, mid-  
 afternoon. Up  
 the lower flank  
 of the mountain*

*Æneid vi, 376*

And he responded: "What I wrote is plain,  
 And not fallacious is the hope of these  
 If one consider it with reason sane,  
 For Top of Judgment stoops not when the pleas  
 Of burning love do in a moment what  
 These do who here await the slow decrees.  
 And in the instance where I tied that knot,  
 Prayer did not counterbalance the defect,  
 Since, from God disunited, prayer was not.  
 Howbeit, waive decision in respect  
 To doubt so deep, till she interpret this,  
 Who shall be light 'twixt truth and intellect.

*In the Earthly  
 Paradise*

Be assured that here I speak of Beatrice:  
 Her shalt thou see above, upon the crown  
 Of this same Mountain, smiling and in bliss."—  
 And I: "Lord, let us hasten to be gone,  
 For I am not as hitherto forspent,  
 And look, the hill now casts a shadow down."—  
 "As much as possible of the ascent,  
 Will we perform today," responded he,  
 "But other than thou thinkest is the event.  
 Ere thou canst climb up yonder, thou wilt see  
 Return that light so hidden that its ray  
 Is interrupted now no more by thee.  
 But see! there is a spirit making stay  
 All, all alone, and looking tow'rd this side;  
 It will point out to us the speediest way."—  
 We thither came. O Lombard soul, what pride  
 And lofty scorn thine attitude exprest,  
 And thy slow-moving eyes how dignified!  
 As we came on he proffered no request,  
 But let us go our way, calmly surveying  
 In manner of a lion when at rest.  
 Steadily drew up Virgil tow'rd him, praying  
 Direction where ascent might best be made;  
 But he, no word by way of answer saying,

News of our life and of our country prayed.

And when thereto the gentle Guide began,—

"Mantua —" upleaped that all-secluded shade

From where before he stood: "O Mantuan,

I am Sordello of thy city!" — said he,

And to embrace of each the other ran.—

Hostel of woe, ah, servile Italy,

Vessel unpiloted in a great storm,

No Lady of provinces, but harlotry!

Eager that noble spirit was and warm

To welcome there his own compatriot,

So did the sweet name of his city charm!

While now in civil tumult are distraught

Thy living citizens, — at daggers drawn

Those whom one wall incloses, and one moat.

Make search around thy seaboard, wretched one,

And after in thy bosom look again,

If anywhere within be unison!

What boots Justinian adjust the rein

If ever empty be the saddle? Without

Such bridle not so black would be the stain.

Ah, gentry, ye that ought to be devout

And let but Cæsar in the saddle sit,

Nor leave unheeded what God pointed out,

Look well to this wild beast, consider it,

Ungoaded by the spur how fell it grows

Since ye laid hand upon the bridle-bit!

O German Albert, who to such as those

Yieldest this wild unruly animal,

And oughtest to bestride her saddlebows,

May from the stars upon thy issue fall

Just judgment, and be it strange and manifest

Such that it may thy follower appall!

Thy father suffered, and thou sufferest,

Held back up yonder by the greed of you,

The garden of the Empire go to waste.

*Political chaos  
of that age*

*Of what avail  
the Law without  
a power to en-  
force?*

*The claim of the  
clergy to tem-  
poral power*

*Albert, son of  
the Emperor  
Rudolph, absent-  
tee King of the  
Romans*

*Warring families in Guelf and Ghibelline feuds*

*The counts of Santaflora of the great Aldobrandesco family, gradually suppressed by Siena (cf. Canto xi)*

Come look at Capulet and Montague,  
 Monaldi and Filippeschi, careless prince,  
 These dreading that which those already rue.

Come, cruel man, and see thy nobles wince  
 Under oppression, cure their hurts, — nay come  
 See Santaflora how secure long since!

Come hear the outcries of thy weeping Rome  
 By day and night, a widow and alone:  
 “My Cæsar, why forsakest thou thy home?”

Come, see thy people, how their love is grown;  
 And if for us thou have no sympathy,  
 Come and take shame to thee for thy renown.

And if it be allowed me, Jove most High,  
 Thou who for us on earth wast crucified,  
 Is elsewhere averted thy just eye?

Or is it discipline thou dost provide  
 In thy deep counsel, for some useful plan  
 To our perception utterly denied?

Swarm in Italian towns the tyrant clan,  
 And a Marcellus comes incipient  
 In every churl who plays the partisan.

My Florence, thou indeed mayst be content  
 With this aside, — thy withers are unwrung,  
 Thanks to thy people all so provident.

The bow of justice is but slowly strung  
 By many, who let no random arrow fly:  
 Thy people have justice pat upon the tongue.

Many would put the public burden by,  
 But answers eagerly thy populace  
 Unbidden: “Shoulder to the wheel!” they cry.

Good reason hast thou to take heart of grace:  
 If sooth I say the facts do not conceal,  
 Thou wealthy and thou wise and thou at peace!

The Athenian and the Spartan commonweal,  
 Long famed for art and law, gave feeble proof  
 Of civil life to what thy deeds reveal,



Who with such foresight weave in that behoof,  
That reach not to the middle of November  
The filmy threadlets of October's woof.  
How often hast thou changed (canst thou remember?)  
Law, coinage, offices, time out of mind,  
And usage, renovating every member.  
And were thy memory not so short or blind,  
Thou wouldst see thyself in that sick woman, fain  
A little rest upon her couch to find,  
Who would by tossing ward away her pain.

## VII

## THE NEGLIGENT PRINCES

*Late afternoon  
of the first day.  
Same place on  
the mountain-  
side*

After the courtly and glad greetings now  
Again a third time and a fourth began,  
Sordello drew back saying: "Who art thou?"—

"Ere to this Mount turned any soul of man  
Worthy to rise with God to be enskied,  
My bones were buried by Octavian.  
Virgil am I; and for no crime beside  
Not having faith, went I from Heaven astray."—  
So forthwith made reply to him my Guide.

Like one encountering upon his way  
Some sudden wonder which he stands before,  
Doubting, believing, saying *yea* and *nay*,  
Sordello stood; then bowed his forehead lower,  
Turning to greet my Leader with embrace  
More humble, where lays hold the inferior.

*Cf. the eulogy  
upon Virgil,  
Inf. i*

"O glory," exclaimed he, "of the Latin race,  
Through whom our language showed its worth so  
well,

O praise eternal of my native place,  
What merit shows thee or what miracle?  
If I be worthy held thy news to know,  
Say from what cloister comst thou, if from Hell?"—

"Through all the circles of the world of woe  
Am I come hither," — so he made reply,  
"Moved by a power of Heaven whereby I go.

Omitting, not committing, forfeit I  
Sight of the Dayspring where thy longings rise,  
And which was known by me too tardily.

There is a place below not otherwise  
Tormented save with gloom, where the laments  
Are uttered not in wailing but in sighs;

There I abide with little innocents  
Bitten by fangs of Death and all undone  
Ere yet exempt from man's maleficence;

There I abide with those who put on none  
Of the three holy virtues, yet who knew  
The others, following guiltless every one.  
But if thou know and can, afford some clew  
To us, whereby we may arrive apace  
Where Purgatory has beginning true.”—  
He answered: “We are bound to no fixed place;  
I lawfully may wander up and round,  
And join you as guide for my allotted space.  
But look! the day declining to the bound,  
And we are powerless to ascend by night;  
Then let us think of pleasant resting-ground.  
Souls dwell secluded yonder to the right:  
Unto them will I lead if thou consent,  
Nor will acquaintance be without delight.”—  
“How so?” was askt, “if any made ascent  
By night, would he be then inhibited  
By another, or would want of power prevent?”—  
“Look!” and the good Sordello’s finger sped  
Along the ground, — “the sun being parted hence  
Thou couldst not even cross this line,” — he said;  
“Not that there else would be impediments  
To going up save shades nocturnal, — they  
Would trammel up the will with impotence.  
One might indeed in darkness downward stray,  
And make the tour of the whole mountain-ring,  
While the horizon prisons up the day.”—  
Then said my Master, as if wondering:  
“Now lead us on whither, by thy report,  
We may have some delight while tarrying.”—  
Thence on the Mountain was the distance short  
When of a hollow I became aware,—  
Valleys down here are hollowed in such sort.  
“Yonder,” proposed that shade, “let us repair  
Where inward-curving slopes a dell surround,  
And dawning of new day await we there.”—

Now level and now steep, a pathway wound  
 That led us to a margin where the height  
 Half falls away before that hollow ground.  
 Gold, silver fine, scarlet and pearly white,  
 Clear Indian wood of azure loveliness,  
 Or fresh-flaked emerald would be less bright  
 Than were the grass and flowers in that recess:  
 In color each of these would be outdone  
 As by the greater is outdone the less.  
 Nor yet was Nature a mere painter yon,  
 But did from thousand odors sweet distill  
 A subtly blended fragrance known to none.  
*Salve Regina*, with such chanting thrill  
 The souls on bloom and greensward there at rest,  
 Concealed before by hollow of the hill.  
 "Before the faint sun settle to his nest,"  
 The Mantuan said who made us thither swerve,  
 "Do not my guidance among these request.  
 From vantage of this bank ye will observe  
 The features and the acts of all and some,  
 Better than down among them in the curve.  
 He highest placed, to whom seems burdensome  
 That he neglected what he ought, for song  
 Upon the lips of others finds him dumb,  
 Was Rudolph, Emperor, who feels the prong  
 In unhealed wounds, fatal to Italy,  
 While healing through another tarries long.  
 The next, who seems his comforter to be,  
 Governed the country whence the waters spring  
 Moldau bears Elbe, Elbe to the sea,—  
 His name was Ottocar, far better king  
 As babe, than bearded Wenceslaus, his child,  
 In luxury and idlesse battenning.  
 That small-nosed one, with him of aspect mild  
 So close in counsel, as seems manifest,  
 Died fleeing and left the fleur-de-lis defiled:

*Philip III of  
 France and  
 Henry I of  
 Navarre; the  
 "plague of  
 France" is  
 Philip the Fair;  
 the stalwart  
 King is Peter  
 of Aragon, hus-  
 band of the  
 Constance of  
 Canto vii*

Look there, how he is beating at his breast!  
 And yonder at his sighing partner glance  
 Who on his palm has laid his cheek at rest.  
 Father and father-in-law of the plague of France  
 Are these, — they know his vicious life and lewd,  
 And hence the grief that pierces like a lance.  
 He who so stalwart seems, whose song in mood  
 Accords with that of him of virile nose,  
 Wore girt the cord of every manly good;  
 And if the youth who yonder doth repose  
 Behind him had long governed in his stead,  
 Worth would have passed from vase to vase in  
 those;  
 This of the other heirs cannot be said:  
 While James and Frederick the kingdoms sway,  
 None has the better share inherited.  
 Not often rises up through branch and spray  
 Prowess of man; it is the Will Divine  
 In order that from Him the gift we pray.  
 My words apply as well to the aquiline  
 As to his fellow-singer, Peter: this  
 Do now Apulia and Provence repine.  
 Matcht with the seed the scion goes amiss,  
 By how much Constance still her spouse may  
 praise  
 More than can Margaret and Beatrice.  
 Look at the monarch of the simple ways,  
 Harry of England, sitting there alone:  
 Better the issue that his branches raise.  
 That one of them whose eyes are upward thrown  
 Is Marquis William, humblest among these,  
 For whom Alessandria and her war make moan  
 Both Monferrato and the Canavese.”—

*He of the virile  
 nose is Charles I  
 of Anjou, who  
 defeated Man-  
 fred at Bene-  
 vento*

*Dante rates  
 Peter, husband  
 of Constance,  
 far above  
 Charles of  
 Anjou, husband  
 of Margaret,  
 and Beatrice,—  
 whose children  
 are much worse  
 than he. These  
 degenerate sons  
 of Peter and  
 Charles are men-  
 tioned again  
 notably in Par.  
 xix. Harry of  
 England is  
 Henry III,  
 father of Edward  
 I, one of the  
 greatest of medi-  
 eval Kings.  
 Marquis Wil-  
 liam is the good  
 but unfortunate  
 ruler of Mont-  
 ferrat (in Pied-  
 mont)*

## VIII

## HAPPY INTERVIEW WITH DEPARTED SHADES

*Nightfall in the  
beautiful moun-  
tain-nook where  
wait the princes*

Now was the hour that melts the heart anew  
In voyagers with yearning for the shore  
The day belovèd friends have said adieu,  
And the new pilgrim feels the pang once more  
Of love, on hearing from the far-off land  
Bells that belike the parting day deplore,  
When I began no more to understand  
His words, on seeing a soul among them there  
Uprisen, who craved a hearing with its hand.  
It joined both palms and lifted them in air,  
Fixing its eyes toward the orient,  
As saying to God, — "I have no other care!"—

*"Before the close  
of light," a hymn  
known to all  
good Catholics,  
is that sung at  
the last service of  
the day*

*Te lucis ante* in notes so sweetly blent  
Came from those lips devout, all my concern  
Lapsed and was lost in rapturous content.  
As led that soul, the others in their turn  
With sweet devotion did the hymn pursue,  
Holding their eyes upon the wheels supern.  
To truth here, Reader, sharpen well thy view,  
For verily so thin becomes the veil  
That it is easy passing inward through.  
I saw that gentle army in the dale  
Silently gazing afterward on high  
As if in expectation, meek and pale:  
Then issuing and descending from the sky  
Two angels with two swords whence flames were  
gleaming,  
But broken and deprived of points, saw I.  
As green as tender leaflets freshly teeming,  
Their raiment, beaten and blown by pinions green,  
In airy wafture was behind them streaming.  
Above us one took post with guardian mien,  
The other alighted on the further marge  
So that the people were contained between.

Their blond heads saw I clearly, but surcharge  
 Of radiance concealed each glorious face  
 Baffling my vision with a light so large.  
 "From their embosoming in Mary's grace,"  
 Sordello said, "to guard the vale these two  
 Come, for the Serpent will arrive apace."—  
 Whence I, because nowise the way I knew,  
 Strove by the trusty shoulders to remain  
 Close sheltered, for I felt me frozen through.  
 "Now go we down," Sordello said again,  
 "And with the mighty shades exchange replies:  
 To bid you welcome will they all be fain."—  
 Three paces peradventure might suffice  
 For my descent; and one did gazing pore  
 Upon me, as in hope to recognize.  
 Already was the air endarkened more,  
 But not so that between his eye and mine  
 It failed to show what it had lockt before.  
 Tow'rd me he comes and I to him incline:  
 Noble Judge Nino, happy was my case  
 When I beheld thee not of the malign!  
 Silent between us was no word of grace;  
 Whereon he askt: "How long since camest thou  
 Through the far waters to the Mountain's base?"  
 "Oh!" said I, "out of dismal caves below  
 This morning come, in the first life am I,  
 But hope to gain the other, going so."—  
 As soon as ever heard they my reply,  
 Sordello and that spirit backward drew  
 Like startled folk whose impulse is to fly.  
 One turned to Virgil, and the other to  
 A soul there seated: "Conrad, look, the Lord  
 Has willed through Grace a wondrous thing to do!"—  
 Then turned to me: "By thanks thou must accord  
 To Him for special grace, who doth so hide  
 His own first motive that it has no ford,

*Judge Nino  
 Visconti, Pisan  
 governor of the  
 Province of Gal-  
 lura, Sardinia*

*Sordello has  
 been preoccu-  
 pied with Virgil,  
 and, the sun be-  
 ing behind the  
 Mountain,  
 Dante's shadow  
 was not visible*

When thou shalt be beyond the billows wide,  
 Say to my Joan that she for me implore  
 Where answer to the pure is not denied.  
 I think her mother cares for me no more,  
 Since she has laid aside her wimples white  
 Which she, poor thing, shall yet be craving for.

*His widow had  
 married one of  
 the Visconti of  
 Milan, whose  
 cognizance was  
 the Viper*

By her example may be seen aright  
 How brief the fire of love in woman's breast  
 Unless rekindled oft by touch or sight.  
 Less fair an emblem for her burial chest  
 The Viper leading Milan to the field,  
 Than would have been the Cock, Gallura's crest!"—  
 While he was speaking thus, his face revealed  
 That upright zeal wherewith the heart may be  
 Aflame, and in due measure stamp'd and sealed.  
 Ranging the heavens my eager eyes could see  
 Only the place where most the stars are slow,  
 As in a wheel nearest the axletree.

*Symbolizing the  
 Christian vir-  
 tues, as the four  
 mentioned in  
 Canto i sym-  
 bolize the Pagan  
 virtues of every-  
 day life*

"Son," said my Guide, "at what art gazing so?"  
 "At those three starry torches," I replied,  
 "Wherewith the hither Pole is all aglow."—  
 "Low are the splendid stars on yonder side,  
 Those four thou sawst at early dawn today,  
 And in their places these are now enskied."—

*This incursion  
 of the Serpent  
 into the abode of  
 the dead is  
 purely allegori-  
 cal*

Sordello seized him as he thus did say,  
 Exclaiming: "See our enemy advance!"  
 With finger guiding him to look that way.  
 At that part where the little valley slants  
 Devoid of barrier, crept a Snake along,—  
 Such offered Eve the bitter food, perchance.  
 The evil streak the grass and flowers among,  
 With head reversed like beast that licks its fell,  
 Came undulating on with dartling tongue.  
 I did not see and cannot therefore tell  
 How the celestial hawks their stations left,  
 But saw the motion of each sentinel.



Feeling the air by their green pinions cleft,  
 The Serpent fled; both wheeling up as one  
 The angels lighted, having barred the theft.  
 The shade, that close beside the Judge had drawn  
 When he exclaimed, had not removed its eyes  
 Cleaving to me till that assault was done.  
 "So in the taper lighting to the skies  
 The wax of thy free will may not abate  
 Until thou reach the flowery Paradise,"  
 Began he, "canst thou tidings true relate  
 Of Valdimagra, or of region nigh,  
 Tell it to me, for there I once was great.  
 Conrad the Malaspina called was I;  
 The elder not, although from him descended;  
 My love of kindred here I purify."—  
 "Oh," cried I, "through your land I never wended,  
 But where in Europe dwells one so forlorn  
 As never to have heard their fame commended?  
 Renown and honor that your house adorn  
 Proclaim the land, proclaim her every lord,  
 So that he knows who never reacht that bourn.  
 And by my pilgrim hope I give my word  
 Your honored kindred do not strip away  
 The virtue of the purse and of the sword.  
 Chartered by custom and by nature, they  
 Though the bad leader warp the world aside,  
 Alone go straight, and scorn the evil way."—  
 And he: "Now look,—seven times shall not abide  
 The sun, returning back within the bed  
 The Ram's four feet now cover and bestride,  
 Ere this opinion, courteously said,  
 With better nails than hearsay hammered home,  
 Shall pierce the very middle of thy head,  
 Unless arrested be the course of doom."—

*Dante was the  
 honored guest  
 of the Mala-  
 spina in the  
 Lunigiana in  
 1306*

## IX

## THE SYMBOLIC GATE

Now did the mistress of Tithonus hoar  
 Show at the eastern window, clad in white,  
 Forth from the arms of her dear paramour;  
 Her brow was glittering with jewels bright  
 Set in the figure of that monster cold  
 Which strikes at people with his tail; and Night  
 Had two already of the paces told  
 Wherewith she rises where our steps were stayed,  
 And the third hour began her wings to fold,  
 When I, on whom something of Adam weighed,  
 Conquered by slumber, sank upon the lawn  
 Where all we five the nightly vigil made.  
 Upon the hour when, very near to dawn,  
 Begins the twittering swallow to repine,  
 Perchance in memory of her woes foregone,  
 When anxious thoughts less narrowly confine,  
 And when the pilgrim soul, from flesh more free,  
 Is in her visions very near divine,  
 Then poised aloft did I appear to see  
 An eagle, with gold plumage, in my dream,  
 With open wings, intent to swoop at me;  
 And I was in that place, or so did seem,  
 Where Ganymede was torn from friends away,  
 Up to the synod of the gods supreme.  
 "Perchance this bird strikes here," I seemed to say,  
 "Only by habit, and from otherwhere  
 Scorns with his claws to carry up the prey."—  
 Methought then, having wheeled a little there,  
 He, terrible as thunderbolt, descended  
 And snatcht me upward to the fiery sphere.  
 There he and I seemed with the burning blended,  
 And so the imagined fire seemed scorching me  
 That of necessity my sleep was ended.

*The lunar  
 Aurora appears  
 around the con-  
 stellation of the  
 Scorpion*

*The other four,  
 having cast off  
 the inheritance  
 from Adam, ap-  
 parently do not  
 sleep. Dreams  
 just before dawn  
 are deemed pro-  
 phetic or in some  
 way true*

*The reference to  
 the woes of the  
 swallow recalls  
 the tragic story  
 of Procne (the  
 nightingale) and  
 Philomela (the  
 swallow). Cf.  
 Canto xviii,  
 19-21*

Even as Achilles shuddered once, when he  
 Found himself gazing round with wakened eyes,  
 Not knowing in what quarter he might be,  
 What time his mother him, her sleeping prize,  
 From Chiron in her arms to Scyros bore,  
 Whence later the Greeks took him,—in such wise  
 I shuddered when fled sleep away before  
 The face of me; and pallid did I stand,  
 Even as a man with terror stricken froze.  
 My Comforter alone was near at hand;  
 The sun above two hours had made ascent,  
 And I was facing now toward the strand.  
 "Fear nothing," was my Lord's admonishment,  
 "Be reassured, for we are in good state;  
 Relax not, but be every sinew bent.  
 Now art thou come to Purgatory-gate:  
 Lo there the cliff that closes round it, lo  
 The entrance where it seems to penetrate.  
 At dawn of day a little while ago,  
 As slept thy soul within thee on the bed  
 Of flowers that deck the meadow down below,  
 A Lady came, and 'I am Lucy,' said;  
 'Let me take up this sleeper; it is meet  
 That so he be upon his journey sped.'  
 With the other noble forms in that retreat  
 Sordello stayed; she took thee, and with day  
 Came upward, and I came where fell her feet.  
 She laid thee here; that open entrance-way  
 With her fair eyes first having pointed out,  
 Together then with sleep she went away."—  
 Like one who wins assurance after doubt,  
 And into confidence converts his fear  
 When truth is known, so did I change about;  
 And when my Leader saw me free from care,  
 He started up along the cliff again  
 Toward the height, and I pursued him there.

*Awakening two  
 hours after sun-  
 rise, Dante  
 learns that his  
 dream was in-  
 deed symboli-  
 cally true*

Reader, thou seest how I exalt my strain,  
 And therefore do not hold it strange if by  
 More cunning art I now the theme sustain.  
 We reached a point, as we were drawing nigh,  
 Whence what first seemed a wall that had incurred  
 A fissure, now threw open to the eye  
 A door, and steps beneath, first, second, third,  
 For access to it, all diverse of hue,  
 And a gate-keeper who yet spoke no word.  
 And as I opened more mine eye thereto,  
 I saw him sitting on the upper stair,  
 Such in the face I could not bear the view.  
 He held a sword whereof the blade was bare,  
 Which shed a sheen so dazzling to our viewing  
 That oft in vain I raised my glances there.  
 "Stand there and tell what aim ye are pursuing;  
 Where is the escort?"—he began to say,  
 "Beware lest coming up be your undoing!"—  
 My Master answered him: "This very day  
 A Lady of Heaven, aware how to proceed,  
 Bade, 'Thither go, there is the entrance-way!'"—  
 "And may she all your steps with blessing speed,"  
 Rejoined the Gate-keeper in courteous tone,  
 "Come to our stair then, as it is decreed."—  
 Thither we came: a great white marble stone  
 Was the first stair, so polisht and so terse  
 That in it was my very image shown.  
 The second, tinct of deeper hue than perse,  
 Was rugged rock, scorcht with corrosive stain,  
 And cloven through both lengthwise and traverse.  
 The third, which from above thrusts down amain,  
 Seemed to me porphyry, as luminant  
 As red blood spirting from a master-vein.  
 Upon this last one both his feet did plant  
 Th' Angel of God, who sat the threshold warding,  
 Which seemed to me of stone of adamant.

*The Door of Purgatory, the Warder, and the three symbolic steps. Allegorically, the steps are Confession, Contrition, Love. Anagogically they may represent, first the white purity of Christ; second, the cross of Christ breaking and making contrite the black heart; third, the redeeming blood of Christ. The Adamant: the sure foundation (Par. xxix, 111). The Angel is the priest. The Seven P's, the mortal sins. The Keys, those given to St. Peter*

Up the three steps, mine own good will according,  
 Drew me my Guide, and said: "Humbly request  
 That he unlock, admittance thus affording."—  
 Devoutly fell I at the footpalms blest;  
 For mercy craved the opening to me;  
 But first I smote me thrice upon the breast.  
 With sword-point he inscribed the letter P  
 Sevenfold upon my forehead: "Once inside,  
 Take heed to wash away these wounds,"—said he.  
 Ashes, or earth which has been digged and dried,  
 Would match the hue of his habiliment,  
 And, drawn from underneath it, I descried  
 Two keys, one gold, one silver instrument;  
 Now with the white, then with the yellow too,  
 He plied the gate until I was content.  
 "Should either key the fastening not undo,  
 Within the wards inadequately plying,"  
 Said he to us, "blockt is the passage through.  
 More dear is one, the other one relying,  
 Ere it unlock, on passing craft and wit,  
 For this one brings the knot to its untying.  
 Peter, who gave them, said 'twere better fit,  
 When people at my feet were prostrate lain,  
 To err by opening than shutting it."—  
 He pusht the portal of the holy fane:  
 "Enter," said he, "this knowledge with you bring-  
 ing,—  
 Whoso looks backward goes outside again."—  
 And when upon their sockets were set swinging  
 The pivots of that consecrated door,  
 Hinges of metal stout, sonorous ringing,  
 Not so discordant seemed, nor did so roar  
 Tarpeia, when away from her was rended  
 The good Metellus, whence grew lean her store.  
 I turned away, and the first note attended:  
*Te Deum laudamus* on mine ear was stealing  
 In voices with sweet music interblended.

*The silver symbolizes the knowledge of human nature which enables the priest to judge of the genuine nature of the penitence; the golden, the power of absolution*

*According to the poet Lucan, the Tarpeian rock bellowed when Cæsar put aside the Tribune and violated the treasury. The reason why the door of Purgatory creaks is mentioned at the beginning of the next canto*

Then listened I with such a raptured feeling  
 As often overcomes the soul down here,  
 When sing the people to the organ pealing,  
 And now the words are muffled, now ring clear.

*Note to first line page 182*

The sensitive reader will not fail to feel the singular loftiness of the style. The scenery wherein the falling asleep and the awakening of the Poet are framed; the imagery of the lunar aurora in the great constellation of the Scorpion; the dim imaginations of his dream and the contrast between its seeming violence and the placid action which it shadows; then the effect of Virgil's narrative upon Dante's mind and mood,—all these circumstances form a symmetrical avenue of approach, flanked by the converging lines of the dream and its answering reality. Hitherto we have been delayed outside the Christian Acropolis, first in the plain by the seaside, then upon the lower slopes of the Mountain; now we draw near to the mystic Propylæum. Invited by the courteous Gatekeeper, we are drawn with our good will up the three symbolic steps. The first of these may be taken as an emblem of the white purity of Christ wherein we behold, as in an accusing mirror, the stains which we have come to purge away. The second step, dark and rough and scorched, of massive stone cracked lengthwise and across, brings the broken and contrite heart in contact with the Cross of Christ; while perhaps the third, which seemed porphyry flaming like blood from a master vein, denotes acceptance on the part of the pilgrim of the redeeming blood of Christ. The Bird of God who sits above the threshold of adamant typifies the Priest receiving confession by authority of the Church. Here should be borne in mind the Poet's explanation in his letter to Can Grande of the various ways in which his poem may be read: it has meanings literal, moral, allegorical, anagogical,—now this meaning and now that one shining out, and sometimes two or three different meanings dazzling the reader with their iridescence. Thus here the threshold of adamant is a member of an architectural structure, while allegorically it refers to the solid foundation upon which Christ built the Church, morally to the steadfastness appropriate to the confessor, and anagogically (as Torraca suggests) to the light of Grace.

The purpose of the invocation is, in the light of these considerations, clear. The reader will not have failed to note how habitually Dante descends at the close of a canto to some moral exhortation, some bitter invective, some piece of satire; and the loftier the theme of the canto the more studiously homely is the phrasing of such descent to earth. There is such a descent to the language and needs of little people (*muliercule*) at the close of the preceding and of the succeeding canto. Such descents are more frequent as we go up and on. But in this canto there is no descent, and the Poet challenges the reader not to wonder if he uses more art to support the exalted matter of his song.

## X

## THE MARVELOUS CARVED WALLS

When once within the threshold of the gate,  
 Which souls disuse through evil inclination  
 To make the crooked pathway appear straight,  
 I felt it closed by its reverberation:  
 And if I had turned back mine eyes thereto,  
 What for the fault were fitting exculpation?  
 A fissured rock were we ascending through,  
 Which did to this side and the other sway  
 As waves advancing and receding do.  
 "Now must a little skill come into play,  
 In keeping close, now here," my Leader said,  
 "Now yonder, to the side that curves away."—  
 So scantily our steps were making head  
 That the moon's waning disk had time thereby  
 To settle down to rest within her bed,  
 Before we issued from that needle's eye.  
 But when we reached a free and open land  
 Above, where gathers back the mountain, I  
 Being weary, both uncertain on which hand  
 The way led, stopped we, not to go amiss  
 By roads more lonely than through desert sand.  
 From where the void borders the precipice  
 To base of the high cliff ascending sheer,  
 The human form thrice told would measure this;  
 And, as I winged my glances far and near,  
 Now to the leftward, now toward the right,  
 Still did this cornice such to me appear.  
 Our feet had not yet moved upon the height,  
 When that sheer cliff around us, there become  
 Too steep for climbing, proved of marble white  
 And decked with carvings past the masterdom  
 Not only of cunning Polycletus,—nay,  
 Nature herself had there been overcome.

*Second day:  
 middle of the  
 forenoon. On  
 the first of the  
 seven terraces,  
 that where the  
 Sin of Pride is  
 expiated*

*The hinges  
 creak, therefore,  
 because "strait is  
 the gate, and few  
 there be that find  
 it"; and the sym-  
 bolism is sus-  
 tained by the  
 loneliness of the  
 way upon which  
 they enter. In  
 the narrow pass  
 where the walls  
 undulate, the  
 poets are careful  
 to go straight  
 ahead. "The  
 evil love of souls  
 which makes the  
 crooked way  
 seem straight,"  
 implies famil-  
 iarity with the  
 poet's belief, to  
 be fully devel-  
 oped later, that  
 all actions, good  
 or bad, are  
 prompted by  
 love of the good*

*This first subject, as described in the first chapter of the gospel of Luke, has of course been since the time of Dante a favorite one with painters. Almost every one of the great masters has made a lovely picture of the Annunciation*

The Angel who proclaimed on earth the sway  
 Of peace long ages sighed to constitute,  
 Which swept the ancient ban of Heaven away,  
 Before us stood with truth so absolute  
 Carved in the acting of the gracious theme,  
 That it appeared to be no image mute.  
 You'd swear that he cried "Hail!" for how misdeem  
 When there was imaged forth that Lady dear  
 Who turned the key to open Love supreme?  
 "Behold the handmaid of the Lord is here!"—  
 Such was the language by her mien attested,  
 Clearly as figure stamp in wax is clear.  
 "Attend not to one part alone,"—requested  
 The kindly Master who was holding me  
 On that side where the human heart is nested;  
 Whereat, my glance removing, did I see  
 Next beyond Mary, and toward the Guide  
 Who urged me on, another history  
 Set in the rock; whence, turning to that side,  
 I passed by Virgil and drew nigh alone,  
 So that it might the better be descried.  
 There in the living marble carved, were shown  
 The cart and kine the holy ark that drew,  
 Whereby we fear an office not our own.  
 People were grouped about the foreground, who,  
 In seven choirs, made my two senses say,  
 One, "They sing not," the other, "Yes, they do."  
 And likewise, where the marble did portray  
 The smoke of incense, eyes and nostrils bore  
 Discordant witness both of yea and nay.  
 The lowly Psalmist, high-girt, on before  
 The sacred vessel, bounded in the dance,  
 And, doing so, was less than king and more.  
 Michal was figured, looking on askance  
 From window of great palace opposite,  
 Perturbed and scornful in her countenance.

2 Samuel vi,  
4-7

2 Samuel vi,  
12-16



From there the movement of my feet was slight  
 Till I could scan another tale anigh,  
 Which, beyond Michal, gleamed upon me white.  
 Herein was historied the glory high  
 Of the princely Roman who, beneficent,  
 Moved Gregory to his great victory:  
 Trajan, the emperor, hereby is meant;  
 And a poor widow to his bridle clung  
 In attitude of grief and of lament.  
 He seemed to ride with many a knight, among  
 A trampling throng; eagles of golden hue  
 Above him streaming to the wind seemed flung.  
 "Avenge me, Sire!"—amid that retinue  
 Appeared that wretched mother to implore,  
 "For my slain son my heart is stricken through."  
 "Be patient," answered her the Emperor,  
 "Till my return."—And she, with urgent moan  
 Replied: "How, Sire, if thou return no more?"—  
 Then he: "Whoso shall sit upon my throne  
 Will do it."—And she: "What boot shall be to thee  
 Another's bounty, if thou stint thine own?"—  
 "Now be thou comforted," consented he,  
 "For ere I go my duty must I do,  
 So Justice wills, pity restraining me."—  
 That Being who can look on nothing new  
 Produced that visible speech engraven yon,  
 Unknown here, therefore novel to our view.  
 While I delighted me to look upon  
 These portraits of humility so fair  
 And dear, considering Who this had done,  
 "Lo, many people, but with footsteps rare,"  
 Murmured the Poet, "on this side of us;  
 These will direct us to the lofty stair."—  
 Mine eyes, that were intent on gazing thus,  
 Turned round toward him, loath to be delayed,  
 To see new objects still solicitous.

*It was believed  
 that Trajan was  
 removed from  
 Hell and re-  
 deemed in  
 answer to the  
 prayers of  
 Gregory the  
 Great. Cf. the  
 great place given  
 to the just  
 Emperor in  
 Paradise xx*

*Dante attributes  
to the reader  
that Sin of Pride  
which he ac-  
knowledges to  
have been his  
own (as will  
appear later)*

I would not have thee, Reader, shrink dismayed  
 From thy good purpose, though thou come to know  
 How God ordains it that the debt be paid.  
 Take heed not to the fashion of the woe;  
 Think on what follows; at the worst take thought  
 Beyond the Judgment Day it cannot go.  
 "Master," began I, "what I see seems not  
 Persons approaching us with motion slight,  
 But sight is so at fault, I know not what."—  
 And he replied to me: "So dire a plight  
 Doubles them down with punishment condign,  
 That I could not at first believe my sight.  
 But closely look till vision disentwine  
 What yonder comes beneath those bowlders bent:  
 Already canst thou see how all repine."—  
 O ye proud Christians, wretched and forspent,  
 Infirm in vision of your inward eyes,  
 Who in backsliding steps are confident,  
 Perceive ye not how we from worms arise  
 To form the fair angelic butterfly  
 Which unto judgment undefended flies?  
 Why is the spirit in you puffed on high,  
 Since ye are ungrown insects at your best,  
 Defective grubs that undeveloped die!  
 As ceiling or roof timbers often rest  
 On corbels, carved to indicate the strain  
 In figure quaint, contorting knee to breast,—  
 Whence out of the unreal, real pain  
 Is bred in him who looks,—beneath such stress  
 Did I see these, on giving heed again.  
 True is it, they were bowed down more and less  
 As more or less upon their backs they bore,  
 And he whose look seemed most to acquiesce,  
 Weeping, did seem to say: "I can no more!"—

XI

THE PROUD MADE HUMBLE

"Our Father, Thou who dwellest high in Heaven,  
 Not circumscribed, save by the Love immense  
 That to Thy first creation Thou hast given,  
 Praised be Thy name and Thy omnipotence  
 By all created beings, emulous  
 To render thanks to Thy sweet effluence.  
 Let peace from Thine own kingdom come to us,  
 For with all reach of soul that in us lies  
 We cannot win it, if it come not thus.  
 As Thine own holy angels sacrifice  
 Their will to Thee, while they Hosannah sing,  
 So let men do with penitential sighs.  
 This day to us our daily manna bring,  
 For in this desert rough, in utter dearth,  
 We backward go when most endeavoring.  
 As we forgive to every one on earth  
 The wrongs we bore, so graciously do Thou  
 Forgive us, and look not upon our worth.  
 Put not to proof before our ancient foe  
 Our power of will, so easily undone,  
 But liberate from him who spurs it so.  
 We make, dear Lord, this final orison  
 Not for ourselves, because there is no need,  
 But all for dear ones left behind us yon."—  
 Beseeching for themselves and us good speed,  
 Those heavy-laden shades went their slow way  
 Under such loads as oft from dreams proceed,  
 And with unequal anguish circled they  
 Wearily that first cornice of the Hill,  
 Purging the soilure of the world away.  
 If good for us be spoken yonder still,  
 What may be done and said for them down here  
 By those who have a good root to their will?

*Morning of the  
 second day*

*The prayer  
 "Deliver us from  
 the Evil One"  
 is no longer  
 needed, but is  
 made for us who  
 are still subject  
 to fall. How  
 then should we  
 remember them  
 when we pray!*

Surely we ought to give them aid to clear  
 The stains they carried hence, that light and chaste  
 They issue forth upon the starry sphere.  
 "Ah, so may justice and may pity haste  
 To disburden you and speed your wing  
 Whither your heart's desire is wholly graced,  
 Tell us which passage to the stair may bring  
 Us soonest, and if more than one there be,  
 Show that where least is need of clambering:  
 For in the flesh of Adam comes with me  
 This person, by the burden so opprest  
 That, although willing, he mounts charily."—  
 The answer to these words, wherewith addrest  
 Those weary souls my Leader and my Friend,  
 Came back, from whom was yet not manifest;  
 But it was said: "If to the right ye wend  
 With us along the cliff, ye shall be shown  
 A passage where the living could ascend.  
 And if I were not hampered by the stone  
 Taming my neck, erewhile imperious,  
 So that perforce I hold my visage down,  
 Then would I scan that one, not named to us  
 But still alive, to see if him I knew,  
 And make him of this burden piteous.  
 To a great Tuscan Sire my birth is due,  
 William Aldobrandesco: I know not  
 Whether his name was ever known to you.  
 My ancient blood, and prowesses that wrought  
 My forebears, so my vanity beguiled,  
 That, of our common mother losing thought,  
 At all men with high arrogance I smiled,  
 So that I died, as know the Sienese,  
 And knows in Campagnatico each child.  
 Humbert am I; nor harmed my haughtiness  
 Me only, but all those my kinsmen bred  
 Are dragged in consequence to deep distress.

*Once one of  
 those great  
 counts of Santa  
 Fiora mentioned  
 in Canto vi.  
 They boasted of  
 having a castle  
 for every day in  
 the year*

*Where he was  
 killed*

And here I cannot choose but bow my head  
 Beneath this load till satisfied be Grace,—  
 Since not alive I did it, with the dead.”—  
 Listening to him, I bended down my face;  
 And one of them beneath the weight they brook  
 (Not he who spoke) twisted himself apace  
 And saw me and recognized and called, his look,  
 Albeit with effort, at my figure aimed  
 Which going withal their crouching posture took.  
 “Art thou not Oderisi,”—I exclaimed,  
 “Glory of Gubbio for that art of thine  
 In Paris now ‘illuminating’ named?”—  
 “Brother,” said he, “the leaves more smiling shine  
 By Franco of Bologna’s brush made fair:  
 His now is all the boast, eclipsing mine.  
 I had not been so courteous over there  
 While living, for the yearning strong in me  
 For excellence, which was my utmost care.  
 Here of such pride is paid the penalty;  
 And had I not, while free to sin, been fain  
 To turn to God, even here I should not be.  
 O glory of the human powers, how vain!  
 Brief seasons to the summit verdure yield  
 If no beclouded era supervene.  
 Thought Cimabue to possess the field  
 In painting; now is Giotto in request  
 So that the elder glory is concealed.  
 So did one Guido from the other wrest  
 The palm in language; there may be, who knows?  
 One born to drive both eagles from the nest.  
 Worldly renown is windy breath that goes  
 Now hither and now yon, and changes name  
 According to the quarter whence it blows.  
 If old thou strip thy flesh, shall then thy fame  
 Be much more glorious than hadst thou died  
 While pap and prattle still thy lips became,

*The pride of  
the artist*

*Guido Guin-  
celli, whom we  
shall meet in  
Canto xxvi,  
and Guido  
Cavalcanti,  
whose father we  
met in Inferno x.  
The third poet  
is doubtless  
Dante himself.  
With delicate  
self-betrayal, he  
thus illustrates  
that he was not  
exempt from  
“that last in-  
firmity of noble  
mind”*

*The lord of the  
splendid city of  
Siena*

A thousand years to come? a briefer tide  
 To all eternity, than wink of eye  
 To circle round the Heaven most slowly plied.  
 With him who little road doth occupy  
 Before me, rang all Tuscany of yore,  
 Though few for him now in Siena sigh  
 Where he was master once, and overbore  
 The rabidness of Florence, prostitute  
 At present, even as she was proud before.  
 As color of the grass is your repute  
 Which comes and goes; He makes it yellow and sere  
 Who summons from the earth the greening fruit."—  
 And I: "Thy truthful words make lowlier  
 My spirit, and abate my swelling pride:  
 But who is he of whom thou spokest here?"—  
 "That? Provenzan Salvani," he replied,  
 "Put here because presumptuous to hold  
 All Siena underfoot. So since he died  
 Has he been going, and ever as of old  
 Unresting goes; with such coin he atones  
 Who in the other life has been too bold."—  
 And I: "If every spirit who postpones  
 Repentance till he reach life's utmost rim  
 Cannot, unaided by good orisons,  
 Ascend the Mount, but must an interim  
 Equal to all his life remain below,—  
 How has the coming been vouchsafed to him?"—  
 And he: "When living in the greatest show,  
 Upon the Campo of Siena fain  
 Was he to stand and all respect forgo:  
 For, wishing to deliver from the pain  
 Of Charles's prison house, a friend, he there  
 Compelled himself to quake in every vein.  
 I say no more, of darkling words aware;  
 But shortly will thy neighbors bring about  
 That thou the pregnant comment canst prepare.  
 This action from those limits let him out."—

*Dante is also to  
know what it  
means to depend  
upon the charity  
of strangers*

## XII

## THE PICTURED FLOOR

Abreast, like oxen going in a yoke,  
 I with that heavy-laden soul went on,  
 By the kind Teacher's leave. But when he spoke:  
 "Now it behooves us leave him and be gone;  
 To ply the bark with sail and oar is best  
 Here, far as possible, for every one,"  
 Upright, prepared for walking, I redressed  
 My body, howsoever inwardly  
 My thoughts remained both lowly and depressed.  
 I had moved on, and followed willingly  
 The footsteps of my Master, and so fleet  
 We went as showed us light of foot to be,  
 When said he: "Cast thine eyes down; it is meet,  
 In order well the pathway to beguile,  
 To look upon the bed beneath thy feet."  
 As, that their memory remain awhile,  
 Earth-level tombs above the buried show  
 The carven traces of their former style,  
 Whence tears for them there often freshly flow  
 Through pricking of remembrances, that stir  
 Only the tender-hearted: even so  
 Beheld I, but of semblance goodlier  
 There, in accordance with the Workman's worth,  
 Figured the way along that mountain-spur.  
 I saw on one side him of nobler birth  
 Than any other creature, swift as light  
 Fall like a thunderbolt from Heaven to Earth.  
 I saw Briareus, smitten by the bright  
 Celestial dart, with chill of death subdued,  
 Heavy upon the ground there opposite.  
 I saw Thymbræus, Pallas, Mars, who stood  
 In armor round their Father, and they were  
 Gazing at members of the giants strewed.

*The time is near noon of the second day: the place further to the right around the Terrace of the Proud. The symmetrical rhetoric corresponds with the formal arrangement of the pictures. Carven tombs in the pavement of the church are common in Italy; but the most notable example of a pictured floor is in the Cathedral of Siena (the "graffiti"). Any reader with a Bible and a dictionary can look up the examples*

*Series of stanzas beginning alike are frequent: e.g., the three beginning with the word "Love" in Francesca's story (Inf. v), and the more elaborated series in Paradiso xix-xx*

I saw, at foot of his great labor, stare  
    Bewildered Nimrod, where on Shinar plain  
    Lay those who with him had been haughty there.  
O Niobe, with eyes how full of pain,  
    Portrayed upon the path I saw thee too,  
    Between thy seven and seven children slain!  
O Saul, how on your proper sword did you  
    There lifeless upon Mount Gilboa show,  
    That felt thereafter neither rain nor dew!  
O mad Arachne, I beheld thee so,  
    Half spider, wretched on the ruin wrought  
    Upon the web thou wovest to thy woe!  
O Rehoboam, here thy form does not  
    Appear to threaten, but fulfilled with fear,  
    Snatcht from pursuers by a chariot!  
Showed the hard pavement, too, what guerdon dear  
    Alcmæon made unto his mother once  
    The ill-predestined ornaments appear;  
Showed how upon Sennacherib the sons  
    Fell in the temple, where, when he was slain,  
    They left him without any orisons;  
Showed how great ruin and what cruel pain  
    Wrought Tomyris, when she to Cyrus said:  
    "Thy thirst for blood with blood I slake again";  
Showed how in panic the Assyrians fled  
    As soon as Holofernes was undone,  
    And showed the remnants of that victim dead.  
I saw in caves and ashes Ilion:  
    O Troy, thy state how low and pitiful  
    Showed in the sculptured imagery yon!  
What Master could with brush or graving-tool  
    Those lines and shades so deftly have bestowed,  
    To make the cleverest wit cry "wonderful"?  
The dead seemed dead, alive the living showed:  
    Better than I, saw not who saw the true,  
    All that I trod while bent above my road.



Now lift your haughty looks, insolent crew  
 Of sons of Eve, nor glance ye at the ground  
 To see the wicked way that ye pursue!  
 More of the mount by us was circled round,  
 And the sun's course now far more nearly spent,  
 Than deemed my spirit, which was not unbound,  
 When he who ever vigilantly went  
 Before me, "Lift thy head," began to say,  
 "The time is past for going thus intent.  
 Lo! yonder is an Angel in array  
 To come toward us: lo! returning seen  
 The sixth handmaid from service of the day.  
 Adorn with reverence thine act and mien,  
 That he may gladly speed our way on high:  
 Think that this day will never dawn again."  
 Well wonted to his monishing was I,  
 On no account to squander time; and thus  
 He could not on that theme speak covertly.  
 Toward us came the being beauteous,  
 Vested in raiment white, and in his face  
 Such as appears the dawn-star tremulous.  
 His wings he opened, opened his embrace,  
 Bidding: "Approach, for hard by is the stair,  
 And from henceforward ye ascend apace.  
 To these glad tidings the response is rare:  
 Born to soar up, why are ye overthrown,  
 O human race, at every puff of air?"  
 He led us to where cloven was the stone;  
 Here with his wings did on my forehead smite,  
 Then promised me secure the going on.  
 As beyond Rubaconte, to the right,  
 Where sits the temple built to overlook  
 The well-directed city, the sharp flight  
 Of that ascent less pantingly we brook  
 By means of stairways fashioned in the days  
 Safe for the bushel and the audit-book;

*The sixth hour,  
 —so that noon  
 is near*

*Rubaconte is the  
 upper bridge at  
 Florence. The  
 steep flight of  
 steps leading to  
 San Miniato,—  
 built before the  
 public accounts  
 and standards of  
 measure were  
 tampered with*

So here the mountainside a little stays  
     Its dizzy drop from the succeeding round,  
     But high rocks either side the pathway graze.  
 As we are turning thither, voices sound,  
     "Blessed the poor in spirit!"—sweet concent  
     Such that to tell it words could not be found.  
 Ah me, these entrances how different  
     From that Infernal! for with anthems here  
     One enters,—there below with wild lament.  
 We were ascending now the holy stair,  
     And now I seemed to walk with lighter spring  
     Than even on the level plain whilere:  
 Wherefore I questioned him: "What heavy thing  
     Has been uplifted from me, Master, say,  
     That now I go almost unwearying?"  
 He answered: "When the other P's that stay,  
     Though indistinctly, on thy forehead still,  
     Shall, like the one, be canceled quite away,  
 Thy feet will be so subject to good will,  
     Not only will they not be wearied out,  
     But feel delight to be urged up the hill."  
 Then did I as do those who go about  
     Hooded they know not how, till by and by  
     The beckonings of others make them doubt;  
 Wherefore the hand is raised to verify,  
     And finds the thing it seeks, thus lending aid  
     To supplement the office of the eye;  
 So found the fingers of my right outspread,  
     Six only of the letters that erewhile  
     He of the Keys had graven on my head:  
 And this my gesture made the Leader smile.

*The touch of the  
 Angel's wing  
 had erased one  
 symbolic P from  
 the poet's brow*

XIII

SAPÌA OF SIENA

We now were at the summit of the stair,  
There where the mount that heals as one ascends  
Is cut away the second time.—And there  
A terrace round about the hillside trends  
In the same manner as the former one,  
Save that more suddenly its contour bends.  
Shaded or graven form appeared there none:  
So bare the bank, and so the pathway showed  
With but the livid color of the stone.  
“If to inquire of people we abode  
Still here,” the Poet said, “I fear perchance  
It would too much delay our choice of road.”  
Then fixing on the sun a steady glance,  
And centering his movement on the right,  
He caused his left side round it to advance.  
“O Thou, confiding in whose kindly light  
I enter the new pathway, lead,” he said,  
“For leading here within is requisite.  
The world thou warmest, lamping overhead;  
If other reason urge not, by thy smile  
We ought forever to be onward led.”  
As far as here we reckon for a mile,  
So far there did we on our journey move  
By dint of ready will, in little while;  
And tow’rd us were heard flying thereabove  
Spirits invisible, with courteous  
Persuasion, bidding to the board of Love.  
The first voice that went flying onward thus,  
With loud proclaim cried out: “No wine have they,”  
Repeating it long after passing us.  
And ere, far off, it wholly died away,  
I heard another that was flying by,  
“I am Orestes,”—nor did this one stay.

*Early afternoon  
of second day.  
Terrace of the  
Envious*

*Mary at the  
marriage at  
Cana*

*Pylades, wish-  
ing to die for  
his friend*

"O Father mine, what voices these?" said I;  
 And while I questioned, did a third one urge,  
 "Love him that uses you despitefully."

*The Envious are  
 scourged by  
 voices of unself-  
 ish love. The  
 bridle or check  
 to Envy is found  
 voiced at the  
 close of Canto xiv*

And he: "This round doth castigating purge  
 The sin of Envy, and from Love are ta'en  
 On that account the lashes of the scourge.

Another sound must have the bridle rein,  
 And thou wilt hear it, if I well surmise,  
 Or ever thou the Pass of Pardon gain.

But through the air intently fix thine eyes,  
 And thou shalt see along this avenue  
 People, all sitting where the rocks arise."

Then opened wider than before my view,  
 Taking in shades in front, with mantles on  
 That did not differ from the stone in hue.

And when we had a little farther gone,  
 I heard a moaning: "Mary, for us pray!"  
 To Michael and Peter and all the saints a moan.

I cannot think there walks the earth today  
 A man so hard as not to have been stung  
 With pity at what I saw beside the way:

For when I drew so nearly them among  
 That all their actions became manifest,  
 Out through mine eyes full bitter tears were wrung.

In haircloth mean I seemed to see them drest;  
 Each lent his shoulder unto him behind,  
 And all supported by the cliff did rest.

Thus at indulgences the poor and blind  
 To crave their needment by the portal wait,  
 Each with his head upon the next reclined,

That others may be made compassionate  
 Not by the sound of words alone so soon  
 As by their looks that no less supplicate.

As profits not the blind the sun at noon,  
 So to the shades who sat where I have said,  
 The light of Heaven will not confer its boon;

For pierces all their lids an iron thread,  
 And sews them up, as to a savage hawk  
 Is done, since it will not be quieted.  
 Methought it unbecoming so to walk  
 Beholding others while concealed from view;  
 Whence turned I, with my counsel sage to talk.  
 What the mute wished to utter, well he knew,  
 Whence did he not my questioning abide,  
 But said: "Speak to the point; let words be few."  
 Virgil was walking with me on that side  
 Whence one may fall, because a parapet  
 To girdle round the terrace is denied.  
 Upon the other side of me were set  
 The pious shades, who through the suture dread  
 Strained forth the tears until their cheeks were wet.  
 To them I turned me, and, beginning, said:  
 "O people sure to see the lofty Glow  
 Whereto your longing thoughts are wholly led,  
 May Grace soon loosen all the soilure so  
 From off your conscience, that descending clear  
 Through it the stream of memory may flow,  
 Tell me,—for welcome will it be and dear,—  
 If soul Italian here among you be;  
 It might be well for him that I should hear."  
 "Citizens all, O brother mine, are we  
 Of one true city; but be this thy word,—  
 One who a pilgrim dwelt in Italy."  
 By way of answer, this, methought, I heard  
 A little farther on than where I stood;  
 Whence I directed me yet thitherward.  
 Among the others there, one shadow showed  
 A waiting look; should any ask "How so?"  
 It lifted up its chin in blindman's mode.  
 "O soul, subdued that thou mayst upward go,"  
 Said I, "if thou it be that answerest,  
 Vouchsafe that I thy name or country know."

*No dividing  
 lines of race or  
 tongue or land  
 or color*

"I was a Sienese, and with the rest,"

She answered, "here I cleanse my life unfit,  
Weeping to Him to come and make us blest.

Sapient was I not, though named of it

Sapia; greeting with far greater glee  
Another's bane than mine own benefit.

And that thou think me not deceiving thee,

Hear whether I was foolish as I tell

What time the years were sloping down with me.

*The defeat of  
the Sienese Ghib-  
ellines under  
Provenzano Sal-  
vani (Canto vi)  
by the Floren-  
tines*

One day the men who in my country dwell  
Joined battle near to Collè with their foes,

While I was praying God for what befell.

Routed were they, and felt the bitter woes

Of fugitives; beyond comparison

My joy, on witnessing the chase, arose:

So that, uplifting my bold face thereon,

I cried to God, 'Henceforth I fear Thee not!'

As doth the blackbird for a little sun.

Upon the utmost verge of life I sought

For peace with God; and e'en yet would I be

Nowise by penitence of debt disfraught,

Had it not been that, out of charity

Grieving, with supplications holiest,

Pier Pettinagno still remembered me.

*Peter the comb-  
maker, so unu-  
sually honest as  
to be still remem-  
bered in Siena*

But who art thou that comest making quest

About our state, with unimpeded eye

As I believe, and breathing reasonest?"

*Dante confesses  
that his besetting  
sin is pride*

"Mine eyes will be withheld," I made reply,

"But briefly here, for small offense done when

With Envy they were yonder turned awry.

My spirit, too expectant of the pain

They suffer underneath, is terrified;

That load already weighs on me amain."

And she to me: "Who then hath been thy guide

Up here among us, if return is meet?"

"He with me who is silent," I replied;

"And living am I; whence do thou entreat  
     Of me, O chosen soul, wouldst have me yon  
     Yet move in thy behalf my mortal feet."  
 "O strange is this to hear!"—she said thereon,  
     "And of God's love to thee a happy sign;  
     Whence aid me sometime with thine orison.  
 And I implore by most desire of thine,  
     If thou shalt tread the Tuscan earth anew,  
     That thou make good my fame with kindred mine.  
 Seek them among that futile people, who  
     Place hope in Talamonë, forfeiting  
     More hope than when the Dian they pursue;  
 But the admirals will lose a greater thing."

*Talamone was a malarial seaport which the Sienese tried to develop; the Dian an underground stream they tried to tap. The Sienese "admirals" are like those of Switzerland. For other references to this fascinating city, see Cantos v and xi, and Inf. xxix*

## XIV

## DEGENERACY OF TUSCANY AND THE ROMAGNA

*The Terrace of  
the Envious;  
mid-afternoon,  
second day*

"Who is this that, ere Death have given him wing,  
Doth circling round about our mountain go,  
Shutting his eyes at will, and opening?"

"I know not who he is, but he, I know,  
Is not alone: ask thou, who art more nigh,  
And greet him gently, that he answer so."

*Speakers: Guido  
del Duca,  
Rinieri da  
Calboli*

Thus, leaning each to each, held colloquy  
Two spirits, sitting on the right hand there;  
Then, to address me, with the face on high,  
One said: "O soul, that dost already fare  
Tow'rd Heaven, yet planted in the body thus,  
For charity console us, and declare

Whence and who art thou; for so marvelous  
This grace of thine appears unto our eyes,  
As must a thing yet never known to us."

*Course of the  
Arno from its  
mountain source  
to the sea*

And I: "In Falterona there doth rise  
A brook, mid-Tuscany meandering,  
Whose course a hundred miles do not suffice.

From thereupon do I this body bring:  
To tell you who I am were speech in vain,  
Because my name does not yet widely ring."

Then he who first had spoken said again:  
"Thou speakst of Arno, if I picture well  
The meaning of thy words within my brain."

Whereto the other: "Why did he not tell  
The very word we know that river by,  
But keep it back as something horrible?"

And the shadow that was questioned made reply:  
"I know not, but indeed 'tis fitting for  
The very name of such a vale to die.

For from its fountain,—where the waters pour  
So amply from that rugged mountain chain  
Torn from Pelorus, seldom teeming more,



As far as where it renders up again  
 That which the heaven absorbs from out the flood,  
 Wherefrom the rivers have their flowing train,—  
 Virtue is driven like a serpent brood,  
 The enemy of all, or through mischance  
 Of place, or scourge of evil habitude.  
 Whence so disnated are the habitants  
 Of that unhappy vale, it would appear  
 That Circe had them in her maintenance.  
 Among foul hogs, of acorns worthier  
 Than other viands made for use of men,  
 It first directs its puny thoroughfare;  
 Curs it encounters, coming downward then,  
 More snarling than their power gives warranty,  
 And turns from them its muzzle in disdain;  
 The more it flows on downward swellingly,  
 The more the dogs grown wolves discovers this  
 Accursed ditch of evil destiny;  
 Finds then, descending many a deep abyss,  
 Foxes so fraudulent they never fear  
 To be entrapt by any artifice.  
 Nor do I curb my tongue lest others hear:  
 And good for this man to remember well  
 The things true prophecy is making clear.  
 I see thy grandson, who becomes a fell  
 Hunter of those wolf-creatures, and dismays  
 All who along the cruel river dwell.  
 He vends their flesh while it is living,—slays  
 Them afterwards, as would a wild-beast hoar;  
 Many of life deprives, himself of praise.  
 From the grim wood he issues red with gore,  
 Leaving it such not thousand years will show  
 That river-bank rewooded as before.”  
 As at announcement of impending woe,  
 The hearer’s face betrays his troubled mood,  
 From wheresoever peril threaten; so

*Porciano**Arezzo**Florence**Pisa*

*The ferocious  
 Podestà (chief  
 magistrate) of  
 Florence in the  
 first year of  
 Dante's exile*

I saw that other soul, in attitude  
     To listen, grow perturbed and full of teen,  
     When that prophetic word he understood.  
 The language of the one, the other's mien  
     Made me desire to know the names they bore;  
     Whereof I made request, with prayers between.  
 Thereat the spirit that spoke to me before,  
     Began again: "Thou wilt not do the same  
     Favor to me that thou art craving for;  
 But if God will that forth in thee should flame  
     Such grace, I will not as a niggard do:  
     Know then, Guido del Duca is my name.  
 So Envy did the blood of me imbue,  
     That, had I seen a man grow joyful there,  
     Thou wouldst have seen me tinged with livid hue.  
 From my own sowing reap I such a tare:  
     Why set your hearts, O human progeny,  
     On what ye are permitted not to share?  
 This is Rinier, of the house of Calboli  
     The glory and the honor; from their blood  
     Has sprung no heir of his nobility.  
 'Twixt Po and mountain, Reno and the flood,  
     His family is not the only race  
     Stript of integrity and gentleness;  
 For in these bounds replete is every place  
     With poisonous scions, so that late and slow  
     Could ever tilth eradicate their trace.  
 Henry Mainardi and good Lizio,  
     Pier Traversar', Guy di Carpigna, where  
     Be they, O Romagnoles, who bastard grow?  
 When will Bologna now a Fabbro bear?  
     Faenza a Bernardin di Fosco when?—  
     Of humble family the noble heir.  
 Tuscan, let not my tears amaze thee then,  
     When Guy da Prata I recall to mind,  
     With Hugh of Azzo as he lived with men,

*The Romagna,  
 bounded by Po,  
 Reno, Apen-  
 nine, Adriatic*

And Frederick Tignoso and his kind,  
 The Traversara, the Anastagi (those  
 Two houses in their lineage declined!),  
 The knights and ladies, labor and repose,  
 That kindled in us love and courtesy,  
 Where every human heart so wicked grows.  
 O Brettinoro, why dost thou not flee,  
 Seeing that, not to be corrupted, go  
 Many to exile with thy family?  
 Well does Bagnacaval being barren so,  
 But Castrocara ill, and bent to spawn  
 Such breed of counts, still worse does Conio.  
 Will do well the Pagani, when is gone  
 Their Demon from them; but not so that pure  
 Can ever the report of them live on.  
 O Hugh of Fantolini, now secure  
 Thy name is, which no fear may entertain  
 Of sons degenerating to obscure!  
 Now, Tuscan, go thy way, for I am fain  
 Rather to weep than our discourse pursue,  
 So has it left my spirit wrung with pain."  
 That those dear souls could hear when we withdrew,  
 We were aware; and therefore confident  
 Their silence made us of the avenue.  
 When we became alone, as on we went,  
 A voice came counter to us that did say,  
 Even as when lightning cleaves the firmament:  
 "Every one that findeth me, shall slay;"  
 All of a sudden thereupon it passed,  
 As thunder with the storm-rack rolls away.  
 Soon as our ears had truce from such a blast,  
 Behold another of so loud a tone,  
 It seemed the thunderclap that follows fast:  
 "I am Aglauros, who became a stone!"  
 Backward instead of forward, at that sound  
 I stepped, and pressed the Poet hard upon.

*The studious reader will look up these forgotten great in Tynbee's entertaining Dante Dictionary*

*This Devil ought to be remembered for his sonorous name: Maghi-nardo Pagani da Susinana. He was lord of Faenza and Imola. Dante gives him three lines in Inferno xxvii (49-51)*

*Cain*

*Apparently for cooing her sister's hand-some lover*

*The bridle-bit or  
check-rein of  
Canto xiii, 40*

Now was the air grown quiet all around;  
And he to me: "That was the galling bit  
Which ought to keep a man within his bound.  
But ye accept the baited hook, and it  
Draws you toward the Adversary old,  
Whence curb or call doth little benefit.  
The Heavens are calling to you, and unfold  
Their never-fading beauties to your view  
Which ever fixt upon the earth ye hold;  
Whence the All-seeing One is scourging you."

XV

TREASURE IN HEAVEN: VISIONS OF FORBEARANCE

As much as shows, between the dawn of day  
And when the third hour closes, of the sphere  
That like a child is evermore at play,  
So much seemed left the sun of his career  
Toward the night, remaining to be run:  
There it was vespers, and 'twas midnight here.  
The rays were striking full our face upon,  
For so we circling round the mountain went  
That we were going toward the setting sun;  
When yet far more I felt my forehead bent  
Beneath the splendor that did on it smite,  
And the strange matters were my wonderment:  
Wherefore I made a visor to my sight,  
Lifting my hands above these brows of mine  
So as to temper the excess of light.  
As when on glass or water sunbeams shine,  
Then in the opposite direction dart,  
Ascending in a corresponding line  
To that of their descent, and so depart  
Equally from the plummet line away,  
As demonstrate experiment and art;  
So I felt smitten by a flashing ray  
That seemed reflected full in front of me,  
Wherefore mine eyes could not endure to stay.  
"What is it, Father dear, whence cannot be  
Sufficient shelter for my sight," said I,  
"And coming on toward us seemingly?"  
"Marvel thou not if dazzle yet thine eye  
The family of Heaven," he answered. "'Tis  
A messenger inviting us on high.  
In short while to behold such things as this  
Will not be irksome to thee, but delight  
So deep that Nature holds no sweeter bliss."

*Late afternoon  
of second day.  
The sphere is  
surely not the  
Ecliptic but the  
visible heavens,  
our sky, con-  
ceived as always  
in happy, inno-  
cent activity*

*Vespers is the  
time from 3 to 6  
P.M. At 3 in  
Purgatory it  
would be mid-  
night in Italy*

*Ascent to the  
Terrace of the  
Wrathful*

*Guido del Duca:  
lines 86, 87  
of Canto xiv*

When we had reacht the Angel benedight,  
His glad voice said: "From here thou enterest  
A stair than others far less steep of flight."  
Departing thence, we mounted now, and *Blest*  
*Are the compassionate*, did it intone  
Behind us, and *Rejoice, thou conquerest!*  
My Master and myself, we two alone,  
Were going up, and, going, I took thought  
How from his words to gain some benison;  
And turned me to him, thus inquiring: "What  
Could he have meant, the spirit Romagnole,  
Speaking of sharing as permitted not?"  
Then he: "Of his own greatest sin, that soul  
Conceives the harm; whence let it not surprise  
If he rebuke it, that there be less dole.  
For inasmuch as your heart's treasure lies  
Where through companionship ye lose a share,  
Doth Envy work the bellows for your sighs.  
But if love for the most exalted sphere  
Should make your aspiration upward turn,  
Ye would not harbor in your breast that fear;  
Because the more there yonder be who yearn  
To murmur 'Ours,' the more has each, and more  
Of charity doth in that cloister burn."  
"I am further from contentment than before  
I ceased from being silent," then I said,  
"And more of doubt within my mind I store.  
How can a single boon, distributed,  
Give many holders wealth more unconfined,  
Than if it be by few inherited?"  
And he: "Because thou centerest thy mind  
Only on earthly things, thy inward sight  
Is, in the plenitude of brightness, blind.  
That inexpressible and infinite  
Boon up above there, so to love outflows,  
As to a lucid body runs the light.

Much as it finds of ardor, it bestows;  
     So that, however spread the flame of love,  
     Above it the Eternal Bounty grows.  
 And the more people set their hearts above,  
     The more love well there, and more love is wrought,  
     And mirrors each to each the bliss thereof.  
 And if my reasoning appease thee not,  
     Thou shalt have Beatrice to cancel through  
     Both this and every other craving thought.  
 Obliterated of thy wounds are two:  
     Only endeavor that, the same as these,  
     The five may soon be healed by feeling rue."  
 As I was fain to say, "Thou dost appease,"  
     Behold! another Circle did I gain,  
     And eager eyes compelled me hold my peace.  
 There suddenly I felt me overta'en  
     By an ecstatic vision, whence beguiled,  
     I saw a crowd of people in a fane;  
 And at the door a Lady, with the mild  
     Mien of a mother, seemed to say this thing:  
     "Ah, why hast thou so dealt with us, my child?  
 Thy father and myself, lo! sorrowing  
     Were seeking thee."—As here she ceased to speak,  
     That which had first appeared was vanishing.  
 Another then appeared, adown whose cheek  
     Those waters coursed that grief distills, when great  
     Resentment upon others it would wreak:  
 "If Master of the town that such debate  
     Caused to the gods about its name," said she,  
     "And whence doth every science scintillate,  
 Upon that bold embrace avenge thou thee,  
     That clasped our daughter, O Pisistratus!"  
     Her lord benign and gentle seemed to me  
 To answer her with temperate manner thus:  
     "What shall we do to them who wish us ill,  
     If they who love us are condemned by us?"

*Three visions of  
 Forbearance:  
 lessons to the  
 Wrathful  
 The Virgin  
 Mother*

*Pisistratus,  
 lord of Athens*

*The stoning of  
St. Stephen*

Then I saw angry folk aflame with will  
To slay a youth by stoning, raising cries  
Hoarsely to one another: "Kill him, kill!"  
And saw him bowed to earth, and now he lies  
Under the weight of Death, yet, thus undone,  
Still making gates to Heaven with his eyes;  
Lifting to the High Lord his orison,  
With look such as unlocks our sympathy,  
For pardon to his slayers every one.  
Soon as returned my spirit outwardly  
To things external to it, which are true,  
Did I my not erroneous errors see.  
Thereon my Leader, who could see me do  
Like one disputing slumber's masterdom,  
Exclaimed: "What ails thee? canst not stand? go to!  
For half a league and farther art thou come  
With eyes veiled over, and with legs that sway,  
Like one with wine or slumber overcome."  
Then said I: "O my gentle Father, pray  
Listen to me, and I will tell thee what  
I saw, when thus my legs were ta'en away!"  
"A hundred masks upon thy face would not  
Avail to shut thy mind from me," he said,  
"However trivial might be thy thought.  
What thou hast seen was that thou mayst be led  
To ope thy heart to waters of repose  
That pour from the eternal fountainhead.  
I did not ask 'What ails thee?' as do those  
Who only look with inattentive glance  
When reft of consciousness the body shows,  
But asked that vigorous thy foot advance:  
Thus it behooves to spur the laggard, slow  
To put to proof returning vigilance."  
Still forward through the vesper did we go,  
Straining as far as possible the eye  
Against the late and shining rays; and lo!



By slow degrees toward us coming nigh  
A cloud of smoke, as gloomy as the night,  
Nor was there any place of shelter by:  
This of pure air bereft us and of sight.

*The symbolic  
smoke of wrath*

## XVI

LAWLESSNESS OF THE TEMPORAL POWER OF THE  
CLERGY

*Terrace of the  
Wrathful. Late  
afternoon of the  
second day*

The gloom of Hades and of shades that shroud  
 Every star beneath a barren sky,  
 As much as can be overcast with cloud,  
 Made never veil so thick unto mine eye  
 Nor of so rough a tissue to the feeling,  
 As did that smoke we there were covered by,  
 From the closed eye all vision quite concealing;  
 Whereat mine Escort sapient and tried  
 Offered me help, his shoulder tow'rd me wheeling.  
 Even as a blind man goes behind his guide,  
 And lest he haply stumble against aught  
 Might hurt or kill him, does not go aside,  
 So faring through that bitter fume, I caught  
 The accents of my Guide, who did but say:  
 "Take care that we be separated not!"—  
 Voices I heard, and each appeared to pray  
 That might in peace and in compassion come  
 The Lamb of God who takes our sins away.  
 Just *Agnus Dei* was their exordium:  
 One measure was for all, and one desire,  
 So that in harmony seemed all and some.  
 "Master, can what I hear," did I inquire,  
 "Be spirits?"—"Thou hast said it," he replied,  
 "And they go loosening the knot of ire."—  
 "Now who art thou cleaving our smoke aside,  
 Who art discoursing of us even as though  
 Thou didst by calends still the time divide?"—  
 Speech by a single voice was uttered so:  
 Whereat the Master said: "Thy answer be  
 To ask if here the pathway upward go."—  
 And I: "O creature that art cleansing thee,  
 To return beautiful to Him who made,  
 Shalt hear a wonder if thou follow me."—

"I'll follow thee far as I may," it said,  
 "And if the smoke still make our seeing vain,  
 To keep us joined shall hearing serve instead."—  
 "Swathed in the bands that Death unbinds again,"  
 Began I, "do I go the upward road,  
 And hither came I through the eternal pain;  
 And since enfolds me so the grace of God,  
 Showing His will that I behold His court  
 By way quite other than our modern mode,  
 What man thou wast ere death do thou report,  
 Concealing naught, and tell me if I go  
 Right for the pass; and let thy words escort."  
 "Lombard was I, called Marco; and did know  
 The world's concerning, and that virtue love  
 Whereat each one has now unbent the bow:  
 For mounting up do thou straight forward move."—  
 Thus answering, "I pray thee," added he,  
 "To pray for me when thou shalt be above."—  
 And I to him: "I pledge my faith to thee  
 To do that which thou cravest; but I burst  
 With inward doubt till from it I am free.  
 Elsewhere suggested, it was simple first,  
 But now confirmed by words which thou hast said,  
 Redoubled, and to know the cause I thirst.  
 The world in very deed is forfeited  
 To vice by virtue all, as thou dost say,  
 And is with evil big and overspread:  
 But put thy finger on the cause, I pray,  
 That I, discerning it, let others know  
 Whether the blame to heaven or earth to lay."—  
 Voicing his deep sighs in a cry by woe  
 Wrung from him, he began: "The world is blind,  
 Brother, and sooth thou comst from there below.  
 All causes are by you who live assigned  
 To Heaven above, as if its motion still  
 Did of necessity all natures bind.

*Marco Lombardo: a great figure in his day, who left a reputation for sagacity, wit, brusque candor, liberality, honor. If he was prone to ire, he probably had good reason*

If this were true, your freedom of the will  
 Would be destroyed, and it would not be right  
 To have or joy for good, or grief for ill.

The Heavens do your first impulses excite,—  
 I say not all; but grant that this I said,  
 For good or evil there is given you light

And free volition; which to battle led  
 Against the stars, though weary it commence,  
 Finally conquers all, if rightly fed.

Though free, ye are subject to omnipotence  
 And better nature, which doth in you mold  
 The mind, exempt from starry influence.

Hence if the present world go uncontrolled,  
 In you the cause, let it be sought in you:  
 And true intelligence I now unfold.

Forth from the hand of her Creator, who  
 Loves her before she be, in maiden guise,  
 With gleeful laughter and with tears of rue,

Issues the innocent soul, in nothing wise  
 Save that from her blithe Maker, she again  
 Blithely turns thither where her pleasure lies.

Cheated at first, she tastes the savor vain  
 Of trivial good, and runs to that desire,  
 Her love by guide unbended or by rein.

Hence law by way of bridle we require;  
 Require a king discerning from aloof  
 Of the true city of God at least the spire.

*Chewing the cud (ruminating) is the business of the Pastor. The cleft hoof, which does not easily slip, symbolizes the practical wisdom of the magistrate. But the Pastor has usurped the functions of the Magistrate*

Laws are,—but who to put them to the proof?  
 None: since the shepherd, he who goes before,  
 Can chew the cud but cleaveth not the hoof.

Whence folk who see their leader striking for  
 That having which they greedily pursue,  
 Being fed with that, hunger for nothing more.

Well canst thou see that governance untrue  
 The cause is that hath made the world malign,  
 And not that nature is corrupt in you.

Rome, that redeemed the world, once gave to shine  
Two suns, which both the one and the other course  
Made manifest,—the worldly, the divine.  
The one hath quencht the other; and perforce,  
The sword together with the crozier wed,  
Ill can but come of it till they divorce,  
Since, joined, the one doth not the other dread.  
Consider well, if thou believe not so,  
The fruit, for every plant is known by seed.  
In the land laved by Adigè and Po,  
Valor was once in vogue, and courtesy,  
Ere Frederick had quarreled with his foe;  
Now can fare through it with security  
Any whom sense of shame may set at strife  
From speaking with the good or drawing nigh.  
Survive still, to rebuke the manners rife,  
Three veterans, and long appears the road  
To them, till God conduct to better life:  
Conrad, named of Palazzo, Gerard good,  
And Guido of Castello,—better say  
The loyal Lombard, after the French mode.  
The Church of Rome, declare thou from this day,  
That would in double government engage,  
Falls with its burden in the miry way.”—  
“O Marco mine,” said I, “thy words are sage;  
And now I see why Levi’s children should  
Have been excluded from the heritage.  
But who is Gerard, that example good,  
Thou sayest, of a generation spent,  
Who lives to upbraid our barbarous period?”—  
“Cheat me thy words, or make experiment,  
In that thou, speaking Tuscan,” he replied,  
“Seemst of good Gerard unintelligent.  
I know him not by any name beside,  
Unless ’twere from his daughter Gaia drawn.—  
I come no farther; so be God your guide.

*This somewhat indefinite allusion doubtless involves a compliment to a great lady who inherited and increased the honor of a stainless name. Any other interpretation is both baseless and graceless*

Already through the smoke the splendor yon  
Is whitening,—the Angel is there,—before  
He has perceived me, I must needs be gone.”—  
So he turned back, and would not hear me more.

## XVII

## PROFITABLE DISCOURSE DURING THE SECOND NIGHT

Recall to mind if ever shut thee in,  
 Reader, a cloud upon the Apennine,  
 Wherethrough thou sawest but as mole through  
 skin;

*Sunset of second  
 day. Terrace  
 of the Wrathful*

How, when the dank, dense vapors discombine,  
 And slowly fall away, the solar sphere  
 Comes struggling in again with feeble shine;  
 And to thy fantasy it will be clear

Immediately, how I saw once more  
 The sun, that was already setting here.  
 To the sure footsteps of my Counselor  
 Matching my own, from such a cloud I thus  
 Emerged to rays now dead on the low shore.

O power of fancy, oft withdrawing us  
 So from without, we show indifference  
 Though a thousand trumpets round are clamorous,  
 Who moves thee if impel thee not the sense?  
 Moves thee a heaven-informed illumining,  
 Led down by will or starry influence.

Appeared the trace in my imagining  
 Of her, the pitiless, who changed, some say,  
 Into the bird that most delights to sing;  
 And here my intellect in such a way  
 Was lockt within, that nothing was descried  
 Of any object that outside it lay.

*Procne (or  
 Progne), see  
 Canto ix, 15.  
 Dante follows  
 Ovid. There is a  
 more common  
 version of the  
 myth that makes  
 Philomela the  
 nightingale*

In my raised fantasy, one crucified  
 Rained down thereafterward, of scornful mood  
 And rancorous in mien, and so he died.

Around him great Ahasuerus stood,  
 Esther his wife, just Mordecai, he who  
 In word and deed was of such rectitude.

*Haman (Book of  
 Esther). The Vul-  
 gate in one place  
 terms the scaf-  
 fold a "cross"*

And as this image of itself withdrew,  
 Collapsing like a bubble when it wants  
 The film of water it was fashioned through,

*Lavinia, whose  
mother had  
killed herself at  
a false report of  
the death of  
Turnus, Æneid  
xii*

Uprose a youthful maiden in my trance,  
 Bitterly weeping, and she cried: "O Queen,  
 Why wouldest thou be naught in petulance?  
 To lose Lavinia not, thyself hast slain:  
 Now thou hast lost me; she who mourns am I,  
 Mother, for thee, ere for another's teen."—  
 And even as slumber breaks, when suddenly  
 Upon closed eyelids strikes the morning light,  
 And, broken, wavers ere it wholly die,  
 So fell away from me this fancied sight,  
 Soon as there struck upon my face a glare  
 That, matched with what we know, seemed infinite.  
 When I had turned to see the way to fare,  
 I heard: "Here go ye up!" in accents blest  
 Withdrawing me from every other care,  
 Making my will so eager in request  
 To know the speaker, and to look and see.  
 That, until face to face, it cannot rest.  
 But as before the sun, excessively  
 Resplendent, veiling so its form from sight,  
 Thus was the power deficient here in me.  
 "This is a spirit divine, who tow'rd the height,  
 Without our prayer, points where we should be  
 hieing,  
 And wraps himself about with his own light.  
 He deals with us as self to self replying;  
 For who awaits the prayer, and feels the need,  
 Malignly leans already to denying.  
 To such inviting let our feet be sped:  
 Now press we up ere darkness round us be,  
 For else we cannot until dawn is red."—  
 When so had said my Leader, I and he  
 Together toward a stairway turned our feet;  
 And soon as I had reacht the first degree,  
 My face was fanned as by a pinion's beat,  
 And I heard say: "Blest the Peacemakers are,  
 Because by evil anger not beset."—

*Ascent to the  
Terrace of the  
Slothful*



Now were uplifted over us so far

The parting beams whereon the night pursues,  
That upon every side shone forth a star.

"Alas, why are my sinews grown so loose?"

Within me I began to murmur, for

I felt my power of limb was put in truce.

Come were we where ascended now no more

The stairway up, and there we fast were stayed,

Even as a vessel moored upon the shore;

And for a little while I gave full heed

If aught were heard within the circle new;

Then to my Master turned about, and said:

"Inform me here, belovèd Father true,

What fault is in this circle purified?

Though pause the feet, let not thy word so do."—

And he to me: "The love of good, denied

Its due activity, is here restored;

Here the ill-slackened oar again is plied.

Wouldst thou more clearly comprehend my word,

Be but attentive and, although we wait,

Thou shalt derive some profit and reward.

Neither Creator, no, nor thing create,

Son," he began, "was ever void of love,—

Thou knowest it,—or of spirit, or innate.

Innate love doth ever faultless prove;

But the other, by ill aim, or little might,

Or by excessive might, is prone to rove.

While tends to primal goods the appetite,

In secondary things self-moderator,

It cannot be the cause of ill delight;

But when it turns to evil, or with greater

Or less than proper zeal, on good is bent,

The creature works against its own Creator.

As seed in you of all that's excellent,

Thou mayest infer that Love must needs have  
served,

And of each act that merits punishment.

*Second night-  
fall*

*"Accidia" (cf.  
Inf. vii, last  
few lines):  
Spiritual indif-  
ference or torpor  
(not, of course,  
physical sloth)*

*Two kinds of  
love: innate and  
self-directed*

*When love of  
worldly goods is  
not moderated,  
or when love of  
spiritual good is  
torpid*

Now, since there never was a love that swerved  
 From goods that proper to its person be,  
 From their own hatred are all things preserved;  
 And since no being independently  
 Can be conceived, cut from the First away,  
 From hating Him is all affection free.

Hence if, distinguishing, I rightly say  
 It is your neighbor's harm you love, takes root  
 This love in triple fashion in your clay.

*Pride* There are who, seeing their neighbor underfoot,  
 Hope to excel, and for this reason, down  
 From his high pinnacle would have him put.

*Envy* There are who power, grace, honor, or renown  
 Fearing to forfeit, if another rise,  
 Crave the reverse, and on his fortune frown;

*Wrath* Then those who seem to chafe at injuries,  
 Greedy for vengeance, so that it behooves  
 Them evil to another to devise.

*These three  
 affections  
 purged in the  
 lower terraces* Yonder below are wept these threefold loves:  
 Now of the other do I thee to wit,  
 That to the good in faulty measure moves.

Vaguely each one conceives a benefit  
 Wherein the mind may rest, and yearns thereto;  
 Whence each endeavors to attain to it.

*Sloth* If languid be the love inciting you  
 To look upon it, or to make pursuit,  
 This Cornice pains you on repentance due.  
 There's other good wherein there is no boot:  
 It is not happiness, is not the good  
 Essence, of every good the fruit and root.

*Sensual enjoy-  
 ment takes three  
 forms, as will be  
 seen later* The love that yields unduly to such mood  
 Is up above bewept in circles three;  
 But how it were tripartite understood,  
 I leave unspoken, to be sought by thee."—

*Note*

The discourses of Love and Free Will explain the radical difference between the classification of sins in Hell and that which is set forth here (cf. *Inferno xi*). In Hell specific sinful deeds are punished; here the Will is purified. Thus the generic vice which Dante calls Avarice may be the occasion of a great variety of specific sins. To repent of a given sin is one thing; to have the crooked Will so straightened that Love is awakened for the corresponding virtue, is quite another. The avaricious, for example, desires to continue his cleansing and straightening process until unselfish generosity becomes a passion in him.

## XVIII

## LOVE AND FREE WILL

*Second night:  
Terrace of the  
Slothful*

Having made end now to his argument,  
 Into my face the lofty Teacher flung  
 A searching look, if I appeared content.  
 And I, with a new thirst already stung,  
 Was mute without, and said within: "Perchance  
 I trouble him by questioning too long."—  
 But that true Father, who took cognizance  
 Of the shy wish that would no word afford,  
 By speaking, heartened me to utterance.  
 Whence I: "My vision is so well restored  
 In thy light, Master, that I clearly see  
 The whole scope and the import of thy word.  
 I pray thee, therefore, to expound to me  
 The Love whereto thou tracest, Father kind,  
 Every good action and its contrary."—  
 "Direct to me the keen eyes of the mind,  
 And the error will be manifest to thee,  
 Of those who would be leaders, being blind.  
 The soul, to love created prone and free,  
 Is mobile to all objects of delight,  
 When roused by pleasure to activity.  
 From something real your perceptive sight  
 Shapes forth an image and displays in you,  
 So as to make the spirit turn to it;  
 And if, so turning, she incline thereto,  
 That inclination is Love, is Nature's bent  
 Through pleasure striking root in you anew.  
 Then, even as fire has motion of ascent,  
 By virtue of its form which makes it wing  
 To where it dwells more in its element:  
 So the rapt soul doth into longing spring,  
 A spiritual motion, never still  
 Till she rejoice in the beloved thing.

*Philosophical  
discourse con-  
tinued*

*"Form,"—i.e.,  
nature: fire  
tends to rise to  
the sphere of fire  
(cf. close of  
Par. i)*

Now may be evident how very ill  
 They view the truth, who would aver to thee  
 That all love in itself is laudable,  
 Because its matter may ideally  
 Appear good always: but not every seal  
 Is good, however good the wax may be."—  
 "Thy words, and my wit following, reveal  
 Love and its nature to me," answered I,  
 "But therefore all the greater doubt I feel;  
 For if Love offer from without, and by  
 Another foot the spirit travel not,  
 She has no merit, go she straight or wry."—  
 And he to me: "As far as pierces thought,  
 Myself can tell: beyond that fix thy mind  
 On Beatrice, that faith in thee be wrought.  
 Every substantial form that is conjoined  
 With matter, and yet from it cut away,  
 Holds inward virtue of specific kind,  
 Which, save in act, is not brought into play,  
 By its effect alone in evidence,  
 Like life in plant evinced by the green spray.  
 Thus, whence originates intelligence  
 Of first ideas, is unknown to thee,  
 And bent of the primordial appetite,  
 Which are in you as study in the bee  
 To make its honey; and such primal bent  
 Of neither praise nor blame receives the fee.  
 Now, that with this may all desires consent,  
 The power that counsels is innate in you,  
 And ought to hold the threshold of assent.  
 This is the principle wherefrom accrue  
 The grounds of your desert, as gathering  
 And winnowing the false loves from the true.  
 Who to the bottom went in reasoning,  
 Took notice of this inborn liberty,  
 Thus morals to the world delivering.

*The Epicureans*

"Foot,"—i.e.  
 motive

*Virgil stands  
 merely for  
 human reason*

*Scholastic  
 phrasing: soul,  
 although joined  
 with matter, is  
 yet distinct  
 from it*

*Reason watches  
 at the threshold  
 between this in-  
 stinct and free  
 desires*

*Aristotle and  
 Plato recognized  
 free will as the  
 cornerstone of  
 Ethics*

Assuming, then, that from necessity  
 All love is kindled rightly or amiss,  
 To hinder it ye have ability.  
 This noble virtue is called by Beatrice  
 The Freedom of the Will; take heed aright  
 If she begin to speak to thee of this.”—

*For this complicated series of allusions I must refer the curious reader to Moore's "Studies in Dante," iii, 71-73*

The slow moon tow'rd the middle of the night,  
 Shaped like a bucket all ablaze, more wan  
 Now made the constellations to our sight,  
 And counter to the heavens that pathway ran  
 Fired by the setting sun, which he of Rome  
 Sees 'twixt Sardinian and Corsican;

*The modern name of Virgil's birthplace*

When he, that noble shade by fame of whom  
 Pietola every Mantuan town outwent,  
 Had put aside my fardel burdensome:

So that I, who explicit argument  
 And lucid to my questioning had found,  
 Remained like one who rambles somnolent.

*The purgation of the Slothful*

But from this somnolence I was unbound  
 All of a sudden by a multitude  
 Toward us from behind now coming round.

Of old Ismenus and Asopus viewed  
 Such hurrying throng at night their banks beside,

*Their patron god*

If Thebans but in need of Bacchus stood,  
 As these who round that Cornice curve their stride,  
 From what I saw of those approaching me,  
 On whom good will and right affection ride.

*The voices in the air that "scourge" the indifferent.*

They were soon upon us, for that great company  
 Was coming at a run; and with lament  
 Two in advance cried out alternately:  
 "Mary with haste to the hill country went,"  
 And "Cæsar, that he might Iberda gain,  
 Struck at Marseilles, then sweeping Spainward  
 bent."—

"Quick, quickly, lest the time be spent in vain  
 Through little love!"—then cried the others,—  
 "So Well-doing zeal may make grace green again."—

"O people, in whom keen zeal redeemeth now,  
 Perchance, delay and negligence in you  
 By lukewarmth in well-doing shown below,  
 This man who lives (I surely tell you true!)  
 Would fain go up, if shine again the sun;  
 So tell us where is nearest passage through."—  
 These words were spoken by my Guide; and one  
 Among those spirits answered: "Follow us,  
 And thou shalt find the opening anon.  
 We are so full of zeal for running thus,  
 We cannot stay; pardon, we therefore cry,  
 If this our duty seem discourteous.  
 San Zeno's abbot at Verona I,  
 Beneath good Barbarossa's empire, whom  
 Yet Milan cannot name without a sigh.  
 And one has foot already in the tomb  
 Who shall erelong that monastery rue,  
 And rue the having had there masterdom,  
 Because his son, in body lame, thereto  
 Mind lamer still, and who was born amiss,  
 He put in office of its pastor true."—  
 I know not whether yet he held his peace,  
 So far beyond us he was hurrying,  
 But gladly I remember hearing this.  
 And he who was my help in everything  
 Now said: "Turn hitherward and look,—two more  
 Are coming onward, giving sloth a sting."  
 "Dead were the folk whom ocean opened for,"  
 They, bringing up the rear, were crying thus,  
 "Ere Jordan lookt on its inheritor,"—  
 And,—*"Those who found it too laborious  
 To bide the issue with Anchises' son,  
 Gave themselves up to life inglorious."*—  
 Then, when so distant were those shades that none  
 Could more be seen of all that multitude,  
 My mind began upon new thoughts to run,

*Albert, lord of  
 Verona, had  
 made the prior-  
 ate a berth for  
 his lame natural  
 son*

*Those lukewarm  
 Children of  
 Israel who were  
 left in the wil-  
 derness, and  
 those followers  
 of Æneas who  
 chose to stay in  
 Sicily*

*The medley of  
thoughts that  
lapse into dream*

Whence many more were born, a motley brood;  
And so did one upon another teem,  
I lapsed with closed eyes into drowsihood,  
Transmuting meditation into dream.



XIX

A REPENTANT POPE (ADRIAN V)

It was the hour wherein the heat of noon,  
 By Saturn haply, or by earth undone,  
 Can warm no more the coldness of the moon;  
 When geomancers see before the dawn  
 Their Greater Fortune rising eastward through  
 A course she will not long go darkling on;  
 I saw in dream a stammering woman, who  
 Was squint of eye, and of distorted feet,  
 Bereft of hands, and sallow in her hue.  
 I gazed at her: as from the sun streams heat  
 Into the limbs made chilly by the night,  
 Even so my gazing served to liberate  
 Her tongue, and erelong wholly set her right,  
 And with the pallor of her features blent  
 The flushes that to love are requisite.  
 Thereon her speech became so eloquent,  
 And so her song began to charm mine ear,  
 That scarce could I away from her have bent:  
 "Sweet Siren I, who witch the mariner  
 Amid the billows," she began to sing,  
 "So full of pleasantness am I to hear;  
 I turned Ulysses from his wandering  
 By power of song; who listen to my strain  
 Seldom depart from me, all-solacing."—  
 Her parted lips had not yet closed again,  
 Ere for her quick confusion, at my side,  
 A Lady holy and alert was seen.  
 "O Virgil, Virgil, who is this!"—she cried  
 Indignantly; and he was drawing near  
 With looks but to that modest Virtue tied.  
 He seized the other one and laid her bare,  
 Rending her garb, the belly to display;  
 This waked me with the stench arising there.

*Before dawn of  
 the third day:  
 Dante's Dream*

*This woman,  
 whatever her  
 name, is the  
 original of her  
 who is "of so  
 frightful mien as  
 to be hated needs  
 but to be seen"*

*Dante, who  
 knew Homer  
 only by tradition  
 and comment,  
 confuses the  
 Siren with  
 Calypso*

*There is dra-  
 matic contrast  
 between this  
 dream of Vir-  
 gil's negligence  
 and his real  
 watchfulness*

Eying the Master good, I heard him say:

"Thrice have I called thee; rise and come, to find  
The opening where goes thy passageway."—

I rise: lo! round the sacred mountain wind

The Cornices in open day; and now

We go our way with the new sun behind.

Following after him, I bore my brow

Like one who makes himself, o'erborne with thought,

Into the half-arch of a bridge to bow;

*The voice of an  
Angel*

When "Come, here is the passage!"—this I caught

In accents mild, of such benignity

As in this mortal region hear we not.

With open wings that seemed of swan's-down, he

Upward directed who had spoken thus,

Between two walls of solid masonry.

Thereon with moving pinions fanned he us,

Affirming that the mourners shall be blest,

Their souls endowed with solace plenteous.

"What ails thee that thou earthward rivetest

Thy glance?"—began to say to me my Guide,

When somewhat past the Angel we had pressed.

And I: "With such misgiving am I plied

By novel vision of compulsive stress,

So that my thoughts as by a spell are tied."—

"Hast seen," said he, "that ancient sorceress?

She who alone is now bewept up yond,

And seen how man is loosed from her duress?

Be it enough,—beat heels upon the ground,—

Lift eyes toward the lure up, that with vast

Circles, the Eternal King is whirling round."—

Like hawk that, eying first his feet, at last

Turns to the call and spreads his pinions out,

By longing yonder drawn to break his fast;

Such I, and such, far as affords a route

The cloven rock to them who upward go,

I went where starts the circling round about.

When opened to me the Fifth Cornice, lo!  
People who wept upon it there, nor stirred  
From lying prone, with faces turned below.  
"My soul hath to the pavement cleaved!" I heard  
Their voices uttering with such deep sighs,  
That one could hardly understand the word.  
"O ye elect of God, whose agonies  
Are made by justice and by hope less grim,  
Direct us where the lofty stairs uprise."—  
"Come ye exempt from lying prone of limb,  
And would mount upward by the quickest way,  
Let your right hand be ever tow'rd the rim."—  
Reply was made thus from not far away  
To this prayer of the Poet; wherefore I  
Marked something which the speaker failed to say,  
And thereon to my Master turned mine eye;  
Wherefore with cheerful sign he gave assent  
To what my looks were craving wistfully.  
When I could act according to my bent,  
I said, and stood above that being there,  
Whose words already rendered me intent:  
"Spirit, whose weeping ripens thee to bear  
Fruit without which to God is no returning,  
Suspend awhile for me thy greater care.  
Who wast thou? Why your backs thus upward turning?  
When I go yon whence moved my living feet,  
Can I do aught to satisfy thy yearning?"—  
"Shalt learn," said he, "why Heaven esteems it meet  
We turn our backs to it; but meanwhile know  
I was successor to Saint Peter's seat.  
"Twixt Sestri and Chiàvari doth flow  
A river fair, whose title of renown  
Springs from my race. A month sufficed to show  
How heavy the Great Mantle weighs on one  
Who seeks to guard it from the miry sty,  
So that all other burdens seem but down.

*Fifth Terrace:  
Purgation of  
Avarice*

*Mournful words  
of the repentant  
Pope*

Ah me! too late conversion here I sigh:  
     But when I gained the Pastorate of Rome,  
     Then learned I life for what it is, a lie.  
 There for the longing heart I found no home,  
     Nor in that life a loftier ascent;  
     So love of this sprang up in me therefrom.  
 Till then I was a spirit malcontent,  
     Alien from God, devoted all to gain,  
     Whence thou beholdest here my punishment.  
 The effect of avarice is here made plain  
     In purging of converted souls: upon  
     The Mountain nowhere is more bitter pain.  
 Even as our eye was not uplifted yon  
     To Heaven, but fixed upon the things of earth,  
     So Justice here has sunk it earthward down.  
 As avarice quenched our love to all of worth  
     So that our power of doing good was spent,  
     So Justice binds us here in utter dearth  
 Of freedom on this ledge, thus impotent:  
     So long as please our Father just and good,  
     So long we stay immobile and distent."—  
 I had knelt down, and would have fain pursued  
     The conversation, but he seemed to know  
     By hearing, of my reverent attitude:  
 "What cause," said he, "has bowed thee downward  
     so?"—  
     And I: "By reason of your Dignity  
     My upright conscience urged the posture low."—  
 "Make straight thy legs; rise, brother!"—answered he,  
     "Err not; because I fellow-service hold  
     Under one Power with others and with thee.  
 If thou that holy Gospel word of old  
     Which saith, 'They neither marry,' ever weighed,  
     Why thus I speak thou mayst full well behold.  
 Now go: I would not have thee longer stayed,  
     For while thou tarriest my tears I stay,  
     Whereby I ripen that which thou hast said.

*He is no longer  
 the Proxy of the  
 Spouse of the  
 Bride*

I have a niece there named Alagia,  
    Good in herself, if but our family  
    By ill example lead her not astray:  
And she alone on earth is left to me.”—

*Wife of the  
Malaspina who  
befriended the  
Poet in 1306.  
The speaker  
leaves Dante to  
infer why the  
lady is men-  
tioned. See  
close of Canto  
viii*

## XX

## THE FOUNDER OF A GREAT ROYAL HOUSE

*Third day:  
morning hours,  
Fifth Terrace,  
where Avarice is  
purged*

Counter to better will strives will in vain:  
Whence I, for his content, with discontent  
Dry from the water drew the sponge again.

I moved, and with my Leader onward went  
Along the cliff through gaps none occupy,  
As by a wall hugging the battlement;  
Because that folk distilling through the eye  
The ill wherewith the world is all possest,  
On the other side too near the margin lie.

*This terrible  
Wolf appeared  
to the Poet at the  
beginning (Inf.i)*

Thou old She-Wolf, may curses on thee rest,  
That more than all the other beasts hast prey,  
Because thy hungry maw gapes hollowest!  
O Heaven, in whose revolving, people say,  
Conditions are transmuted here below,  
When comes he who shall drive this wolf away?

We went along with paces few and slow,  
And I attentive to the utterance  
Of shadows weeping and lamenting so;

*Examples of the  
corresponding  
virtue*

When on in front of us I heard, by chance,  
"O blessed Mary!"—even as makes her moan  
A childing woman; and in continuance,  
"What poverty was thine may well be known  
By thy poor entertainment at the inn  
Where thou didst lay thy holy burden down."—

*Refused the  
bribes of  
Pyrrhus*

Then: "Good Fabricius, who wouldest win  
The meed of virtue linkt with poor estate,  
Far rather than great opulence with sin!"—  
These words were of delight to me so great,  
That I pushed on, more knowledge to possess  
Of that soul whence they seemed to emanate.

*St. Nicholas  
threw dowries  
into their win-  
dows to save  
them from dis-  
honor*

It went on speaking of the largesses  
Of Nicholas to the girls, their maidenhood  
Thus leading in the path of righteousness.

"O soul abounding in report so good,  
 Tell who thou wast, and why alone," I said,  
 "By thee these worthy praises are renewed?  
 Thy words shall have a meed well merited,  
 If I return to finish the brief race  
 Of mortal life that tow'rd the end is sped."—  
 "I'll tell thee, not that I from yonder place  
 May hope relief," he said, "but since there shoot  
 Forth from thee ere thy death such gleams of grace.  
 I was of that malignant plant the root,  
 Shadowing so all Christian lands that they  
 Yield niggard harvesting of wholesome fruit.  
 But ah! if Bruges and Ghent and Lille and Douay  
 Were potent, there would light on it swift doom;  
 And this of Him who judges all I pray.  
 I was called there Hugh Capet: from me come  
 The Louises and Philips every one  
 Who recently in France hold masterdom.  
 A mere Parisian butcher called me son.  
 When ceased the ancient monarchs to exist,  
 Save one, betaken unto orders dun,  
 Then found I tightly clenched within my fist  
 The bridle of the realm, with power that goes  
 With multitude of friends, and new acquist;  
 So to the widowed diadem arose  
 The head of mine own son; from whom took birth  
 The consecrated bones of all of those.  
 Till the Great Dowry of Provence caused dearth  
 Of shame among the kith and kin of me,  
 They did no harm, although of little worth.  
 Began by fraud and by rapacity  
 Their rapine then; and after, for amends,  
 Took Ponthieu, Normandy, and Gascony.  
 Charles came to Italy, and, for amends,  
 Made Conradin a victim; then a prey  
 Of Thomas, thrust to Heaven, for amends.

*Hugh Capet:  
 founder of the  
 dynasty now the  
 bane of France,  
 Flanders, Italy*

*Would be called  
 today a great  
 rancher or  
 "packer"*

*Charles of  
 Anjou did to  
 death the last of  
 the Hohenstau-  
 fen and St.  
 Thomas Aquinas*

*Charles of  
Valois*

I see a time, not distant from this day,  
That shall lead forth another Charles from France,  
Both him and his the better to betray.  
Unarmed he goes alone, but with the lance  
Wherewith Iscariot jousted, and that same  
Within the bursting paunch of Florence plants.  
He thence not any land, but sin and shame  
Shall win, so much the heavier therethrough  
That he the lighter reckons all such blame.

*Charles, the  
second king in  
Naples of the  
house of Anjou  
(called "the  
cripple of Jeru-  
salem," Par. xix)*

The other, pluckt once from his ship, I view  
Vending his daughter in the market place,  
As corsairs with the other bondmaids do.  
O Avarice, since thou hast brought my race  
To hold its issue at so cheap a rate,  
What further canst thou do for our disgrace?  
That past and future ill appear less great,  
I see the Fleur-de-Lis Alagna gain,  
And in His Vicar Christ incarcerate.

*The outrage  
done to Pope  
Boniface by  
agents of Philip  
the Fair (IVth)*

I see how there they mock Him yet again,  
I see the vinegar and gall renew,  
And between living thieves I see Him slain.  
I see so pitiless the Pilate new

*The destruction  
of the Order of  
the Temple by  
Philip. Cf.  
Browning's  
"The Heretic's  
Tragedy"*

That, yet unsated, he without decree  
Into the Temple steers his greedy crew.  
When, O my Lord, shall I rejoice to see  
The vengeance that doth in thy counsels hide,  
Calming thine anger in thy secrecy?—  
What I was saying of that only bride  
Of the Holy Spirit, prompting thee to pray  
Some comment of me, that is still replied

*In the daytime  
they praise the  
virtue; at night  
they stigmatize  
the vice*

To all our orisons while lasts the day;  
But in the place thereof, when night comes on  
We ring the changes on a counter-lay:  
We tell the tale then of Pygmalion  
Who traitor, thief, and parricide was made  
By gluttony for gold; and harp upon



Poor Midas, how he covetously prayed,  
 And what fulfillment followed to his bane,  
 Wherefore men laugh forever at his greed  
 We all record then Achan the insane,  
 Who seems, because he took the accursed thing,  
 Wrung by the wrath of Joshua again;  
 Sapphira with her spouse to judgment bring;  
 Then praise the hoof-beats Heliodorus bore;  
 And Polymnestor's shame doth all enring  
 The Mountain, for the murdered Polydore;  
 Lastly we cry: "Tell us, for thou dost know,  
 Crassus, the savor of the golden ore!"—  
 Sometimes we speak, one loud, another low,  
 According as affection may be spurred  
 To make the pace of speaking fast or slow;  
 Wherefore, if I alone erewhile was heard  
 Citing the good whereof we tell by day,  
 None else at hand was lifting up the word."—  
 Departed from him, we had gone our way,  
 And on the thoroughfare I spent my breath  
 To overcome it far as in me lay,  
 When now behold! the Mountain shuddereth  
 As to its fall; whence over me is driven  
 A chill, as over him who goes to death.  
 Such shock was surely not to Delos given  
 Before Latona coucht therein, to be  
 Delivered there of the twin eyes of Heaven.  
 Uprose a pæan simultaneously  
 Such that the Master nearer to me trod,  
 Saying: "Fear not while I am guiding thee."—  
 All shouted: "Glory in the highest to God!"  
 For so the neighbor voices seemed to say,  
 From whom the pæan might be understood.  
 Like to the shepherds who first heard that lay,  
 We stood there without motion, all intent,  
 Till ceased the trembling, and it died away.

*2 Maccabees iii,  
 25 (The other  
 examples can  
 readily be  
 found)*

*Apollo and  
 Diana*

Again we on our holy journey went,  
    Eying the shades upon the ground below,  
    Returned now to their ritual lament.  
No ignorance with eagerness to know  
    Ever within me such a battle fought,  
    Unless my memory err, as to and fro  
Appeared then to be struggling in my thought:  
    Nor did I, for our haste, to question dare,  
    Nor of myself could I discover aught;  
So faint and pensive did I onward fare.

XXI

THE POET STATIUS

The natural thirst unsatisfied for aye  
Save with that water for whose boon was fain  
The lowly woman of Samaria,  
Tormented me, and by the encumbered lane,  
Haste goaded me behind my Leader on,  
And I was grieving for that righteous pain;  
When lo! in manner even as Luke sets down  
That in the way to twain did Christ appear,  
From the tomb's mouth of late arisen and gone,  
A shade appeared and came behind us where  
We were intent the prostrate crowd to view,  
And spoke to us before we were aware,  
Saying: "My brothers, peace be unto you."—  
And Virgil, turning with me suddenly,  
Gave back the word of greeting that is due.  
"May the true court in peace establish thee  
In council of the blest," then Virgil said,  
"Though to eternal exile dooming me."—  
"How?" said that spirit, while we onward sped,  
"If ye are shades God will on high not deign,  
Who has so far up by His stairway led?"—  
"But note the marks," my Teacher said again,  
"Which the Angel traces and this man displays,  
Well shalt thou see he with the good must reign.  
But because she who spins through nights and days  
Had not yet from the distaff drawn the twine  
That Clotho there for each, compacting, lays,  
The soul of him, thy sister-soul and mine,  
In coming upward, could not come alone,  
Not seeing in the fashion of our eyne.  
I, therefore, from wide-throated Hell was drawn  
To show him the way onward, and shall show  
As far as by my school it can be done.

*Terrace of the  
Avaricious:  
forenoon of the  
third day*

But tell us why the mountain, if thou know,  
 So quakt erewhile, and all appeared to cry  
 With one voice, to its wave-washt foot below?"—

So questioning, he hit the needle's eye  
 Of my desire, and by the hope withal  
 My thirst was made less hard to satisfy.

The spirit began: "There is nothing here at all  
 That were not subject to the holy grace  
 Of the mountain, or that were exceptional.

Exempt from permutation is this place;  
 In what from Heaven back to itself doth flow,  
 And naught beside, may we causation trace:

Because not any rain, nor hail, nor snow,  
 Nor dew, nor frost can fall, or do offense,  
 Above the little triple stairway; no

*Iris, the rain-  
 bow*

Clouds there appear, or rarefied or dense,  
 No lightning, nor the daughter of Thaumás fleet,  
 Who often, yonder, changes residence;

*Dry vapor,  
 according to  
 Aristotle, caused  
 wind, lightning,  
 thunder, earth-  
 quakes*

Parcht vapor does not rise aloft one whit  
 Beyond the aforesaid triple stairway forth,  
 Whereon the Vicar of Peter hath his feet.

More or less quaking may perchance have birth  
 Down yonder; but up here it never could  
 By wind, I know not how, enwombed in earth.

It quakes when any spirit feels its mood  
 Made pure for setting forward, or aloof  
 Moves to ascend, by such a cry pursued.

*The soul desires  
 its punishment  
 until wholly  
 purified of its  
 sinful disposi-  
 tion. (See note  
 after Canto  
 xvii)*

Of purity the will alone gives proof;  
 Quite free for change of cloister, this intent  
 Takes by surprise the soul to her behoof.

She first wills well, but divine government  
 Sets will against desire, which, as before  
 It craved for sinning, craves for punishment.

And I, who have five hundred years and more  
 Beneath this torment lain, but now could trace  
 Free will for threshold of a better door.

Hence didst thou feel the quake, and spirits of grace  
 Didst hear along the Mountain celebrate  
 The Lord,—ah! may He send them up apace.”—

He said; and since joy is proportionate  
 In drinking, with the thirst to be allayed,  
 My gain by him I could not say how great.

“I see the net now,” my wise Leader said,  
 “That snares you here, and how ye are set free,  
 Wherefore it quakes, and whereat glad ye are made.

Now tell me who thou wast, I beg of thee,  
 And in thy words I pray thee be it told  
 Why thou layest here so many a century.”—

“When the good Titus in the time of old,  
 Helpt by the King Supreme, avenged each wound  
 Whence issued forth the blood by Judas sold,

*Paradiso vi,  
 91-93; vii,  
 19-51*

With name most durable and most renowned  
 I yonder lived,” that spirit answering said,  
 “And passing fame, but not yet faith had found.

*The name of  
 Poet*

So sweet a music from my soul was shed  
 That from Toulouse Rome beckoned me away,  
 Where I deserved brows myrtle-garlanded.

There people call me Statius to this day:  
 Of Thebes I sang, and great Achilles’ might,  
 But with my second load fell by the way.

*The Poem about  
 Achilles is the  
 “second load”*

The seeds that raised my genius to its height  
 Were sparks from that celestial flame shot forth,  
 Whence more than a thousand have been set alight:

The Æneid, I mean, that mothered me from birth,  
 The nurse that suckled me in poesy;  
 Without it were I not a drachma worth.

To have lived when Virgil lived, would I agree  
 To penance of one sun more than I owe,  
 Ere from my place of banishment set free.”—

Turned Virgil to me, he discoursing so,  
 With “Be thou silent,” in his tacit glance;  
 But there are limits to what will can do:

*The sweet and  
tender scene be-  
tween the three  
Poets*

For tears and laughter are such pursuivants  
 Upon the passions out of which they rise,  
 That truest will has weakest vigilance.  
 I could but smile, with meaning in mine eyes;  
 Whereat the shadow paused, and lookt me straight  
 Into the eye, where most expression lies.  
 "So mayst thou well such labor consummate,"  
 It said, "tell wherefore I but now desried  
 A laughter-flash thy face irradiate?"—  
 Now am I caught on this and the other side:  
 One bids "Be still," and the other "Speak to me!"  
 Whence I was comprehended when I sighed.  
 "Thou needst," my Master said, "not fearful be  
 To speak, but tell, and let thy words attest  
 What he besought with such anxiety."—  
 "O ancient soul," said I, "thou marvelest  
 Perchance, because my smile thou sawest shine;  
 But I will move more wonder in thy breast!  
 This one who guides on high these eyes of mine,  
 That very Virgil is, from whom you drew  
 The power to sing of men and the divine.  
 If else thou thoughtest of my smiling, eschew  
 That thought as false; those words thou spakst  
 but now  
 Of him, believe me, were the reason true."—  
 To kiss my Teacher's feet he bent his brow;  
 "Brother," the Master urged with tenderness,  
 "Do not; thou seest me shadow, even as thou."—  
 Then Statius rising said: "Now canst thou guess  
 The sum of love that burns in me for thee,  
 When I can so forget our emptiness,  
 Treating a shadow as reality."—

XXII

THE THREE POETS CONVERSE AS THEY WALK

Behind us had we left the Angel now  
Who up to the sixth round had turned our quest,  
Having erased a stigma from my brow;  
And had announced to us that they are Blest  
Who long for righteousness in all they do,—  
But saying it with "thirst" without the rest.  
And, lighter than at other passes through,  
Following those swift spirits up above,  
I went without fatigue. Then did renew  
Virgil his speaking: "Worth-enkindled love  
Can kindle in us love reciprocal,  
Its ardor being revealed. In proof whereof,  
Among us when descended Juvenal  
Down into the Infernal Limbo, where  
He made thy feeling known to me withal,  
Never did man to unseen person bear  
More love than did my heart toward thee bend,  
So that now short to me will seem the stair.  
But tell me, and forgive me as a friend  
If I give rein to overconfidence,  
And talk we heart to heart now to the end:  
Oh, how could Avarice find residence  
Possibly, in a bosom such as thine,  
Replete with wisdom through thy diligence?"—  
These words made Statius at first incline  
To smile a little; then replied he thus:  
"Each word of thine to me is Love's dear sign.  
Often indeed do things appear to us  
That offer for suspicion grounds deceiving,  
Since their real causes are not obvious.  
Thy question proves it to be thy believing  
That Greed in th'other life had been my curse,  
Perchance because of the round where I was griev-  
ing.

*Third day, late  
forenoon. As-  
cent to the  
Sixth Terrace:  
Virgil and  
Statius with  
Dante*

*For the rest of  
close of Canto  
xxiv*

Know, then, that my offense was the reverse  
 Of Avarice; my prodigality  
 Thousands of courses of the moon amerce.  
 And if I had not, pondering upon thee,  
 Set right my conduct, misdirected first,  
 Where thou exclaimst against humanity  
 Almost in wrath: 'To what, accursèd thirst  
 For gold, dost thou not mortal longing guide?'  
 I should be rolling in the tilts accurst.  
 Then saw I that the hands might be too wide  
 Of wing in spending, and repented thence  
 Of that and of my every sin beside.

*Among the  
 prodigals; Inf.  
 Canto vii; also  
 for their sym-  
 bolic short hair*

Because of ignorance of this offense,  
 How many shall arise devoid of hair,  
 In life and death bereft of penitence!  
 And know that sin, in opposition square  
 Rebutting other sin, dries up its green  
 Together with the opposing trespass there.  
 Wherefore if I, to purge myself, have been  
 With those who weep their Avarice in throngs,  
 I suffered it for contradictory sin."—

"Now when thou sangest of the cruel wrongs  
 Of war that wrought Jocasta's double woe,"  
 The Singer said of the Bucolic Songs,  
 "The chords there toucht with Clio do not show  
 Thee yet as of that Faith a devotee,  
 For want whereof good works are not enow.

What candles or what sun, if so it be,  
 So pierced thy darkness that thy sails were spread  
 After the Fisher of the eternal sea?"—

*St. Peter, as at  
 end of Par.  
 xviii*

"Thou first directedst me," he answering said,  
 "Parnassus-ward, to drink upon its height,  
 Then on my way to God thy light was shed  
 Thou diddest like to him who walks by night,  
 Bearing the torch, not for his proper good,  
 But to the after-comers giving light,



*The Cumæan  
Sibyl,  
Eclogue iv*

When saidest thou: "The world is all renewed;  
Justice returns, and man's primeval spring,  
And out of Heaven descends another brood.'  
Poet was I, then Christian, following  
Thy guidance; but that thou the better view  
My sketch, I set my hand at coloring.  
The world by now was teeming with the true  
Religion, by the sowers of the Lord  
Eternal, scattered every country through;  
And thy words, toucht upon above, concurred  
With the new gospellers in such a wise  
That I became a hearer of the Word.  
They came to seem so holy in mine eyes  
Then, when Domitian persecuted sore,  
That tears of mine accompanied their cries;  
And while I lingered upon yonder shore  
I succored them, whose upright manners made  
All other sects seem worthless; and before  
I, poetizing, yet the Greeks had led  
Far as the Theban streams, baptized was I;  
But hid my Christian faith, because afraid,  
Long while appearing Pagan outwardly;  
And for that lukewarmth did I circling fare  
The fourth round more than the fourth century.  
Do therefore thou, who unto me laid bare  
That good wherein, I say, is great reward,  
While for ascending time is yet to spare,  
Tell me where Terence is, our elder bard,  
Cecilius, Plautus, Varro, if thou know:  
Tell if they are condemned, and in what ward."—  
"These, Persius, and I, and many moe,"  
My Leader said, "are with that Greek confined,  
Prime nursling of the Muses, there below  
In the first girdle of the prison blind.  
Still oftentimes do we discourse upon  
The mountain, haunt of nurses of our mind.

Euripides is ours there, Antiphon,  
 And Agathon, Simonides, and more  
 Of Greeks whose foreheads once the laurel won.

There see we people sung by thee of yore,  
 Antigone, Deiphile, Argeia,  
 And there Ismene, mournful evermore.

There see we her who pointed out Langeia;  
 There is Tiresias' daughter, Thetis there,  
 And with her sisters there Deidameia."—

By this time silent both the poets were,  
 Eager to gaze about them far and wide,  
 From the walls liberated, and the stair;

*The fifth Hour  
 is now driving  
 the chariot of  
 the Sun: it is  
 about 11 o'clock*

And four of the Day's handmaids now abide  
 Behind, the fifth still pointing up the bright  
 Horn of the chariot-pole; whereon my Guide:

"Methinks it now behooves us turn the right  
 Shoulder toward the outer verge, intent  
 To round, as we are wont to do, the height."—

By custom in such manner led, we went  
 Our way with the less fear of going wrong,  
 Because that noble spirit gave assent.

In front they, and alone went I along  
 Behind, hearing their words, which gave to me  
 Intelligence about the craft of song.

*The emblematic  
 fruit-tree which  
 the gluttons can-  
 not climb*

But their kind talk was broken by a tree  
 That midway in the road we encountered now,  
 With fruitage smelling sweet and gratefully.

As fir-tree tapers upward, bough on bough,  
 So this one appeared downward tapering,  
 Methinks that none thereon might climbing go.

There where our way was closed, a water spring  
 Down from the lofty cliff was falling clear,  
 And on the upper foliage scattering.

The poets twain unto the tree drew near,  
 Whereon a voice cried out the branches through:  
 "Dearth of this viand ye shall have to bear."—

"Mary was more concerned," it said anew,  
    "To grace the wedding feast with plenitude,  
    Than for her mouth which now entreats for you.  
Of water the old Roman womanhood  
    Were satisfied to drink; and Daniel nurst  
    Wisdom within him by despising food.  
Golden in beauty was the world at first;  
    To appetite it made the acorn sweet,  
    And every brook like nectar to the thirst.  
Honey and locusts were the only meat  
    That John the Baptist in the desert knew;  
    Whence now he is in glory, and so great  
As by the Gospel is revealed to you."—

## XXIII

## DANTE MEETS AN OLD BOON COMPANION

*Terrace of the  
gluttonous:  
about noon of  
the third day*

Because these eyes of mine yet never stirred  
From the green foliage, like such an one  
As wastes his life to hunt the little bird,  
My more than Father said to me: "My son,  
Come on now; for the time assigned had need  
To be allotted for more benison."—

Then turned I face and foot with equal speed  
After those speakers sage, so eloquent  
As made it cost me nothing to proceed.

And hark! now singing heard, with weeping blent:  
"Lord, open thou my lips!"—Such intonation  
As must beget both rapture and lament.

*This phrase of  
the Miserere  
(Psalm li, 16)  
is appropriate  
to those whose  
sin has been in-  
temperance in  
food and drink*

"What hear I, Father?" was my exclamation;  
And he: "Shades who are hastening, perchance,  
So as to cancel out their obligation."—

As pilgrims rapt in thought, by travel-chance  
Meeting an unknown face along their ways,  
Cast, without lingering, a backward glance,

So came behind us at a swifter pace  
And passed, a crowd of souls as if in flight,  
Devout and tacit and of eager gaze.

The cavern of the eye disclosed no light,  
Pallid each visage, and so hunger-pined  
Over the bone the skin was fashioned tight.

I cannot think that such an utter rind  
Was dried on Erisichthon's skeleton  
By fasting, when it most appalled his mind.

"Behold!" my thoughts within were running on,  
"This is the folk who lost Jerusalem,  
When Mary struck her beak into her son."—

*The dreadful  
tale is told by  
Josephus*

Each eyepit seemed a ring without the gem:  
Who OMO reads in face of man, might well  
Here in each countenance make out the M.

*The Latin for  
man is printed  
on the human*

Who ever could believe that from the smell  
     Of apples or of water there could grow  
     Such craving, knowing not how this befell?  
 I still was wondering what pined them so,  
     The cause that rendered them so scurvily  
     Withered and meager being yet to know,  
 When, look now, from its deep skull cavity  
     A spirit made its eye upon me keen,  
     Then cried aloud: "What grace is this to me!"  
 Never should I have known him by his mien,  
     But something lingered in his utterance  
     That in his lineament had canceled been.  
 This spark enkindled to my inward glance  
     Something familiar in his altered look,  
     And I recalled Forese's countenance.  
 "Ah, do not mind," he prayed, "the scurf that took  
     The fresh complexion of my skin away,  
     Nor yet the lack of flesh I have to brook,  
 But tell me truth of thee, and who are they,  
     Yon spirits twain by whom thou'rt hither led?  
     Ah, tarry not, speak, speak to me, I pray!"—  
 "Thy face, bewept by me when thou wast dead,  
     Gives me for weeping now no lesser rue  
     Beholding it disfigured so," I said.  
 "By hope of Heaven, then tell what withers you:  
     Bid me not speak while marveling, for ill  
     One speaks, by other craving stricken through!"—  
 And he to me: "By the Eternal Will  
     Falls virtue to the water and the plant  
     Behind us, that emaciates me still.  
 All of these people who lamenting chant,  
     For being out of measure gluttonous,  
     Grow holy here through thirst and hunger gaunt.  
 Craving for food and drink is stirred in us  
     By fragrance from the fruit, and from the spray  
     That sprinkles over all the verdure thus.

*face. The limbs  
 of the M are  
 clearer for the  
 disappearance  
 of the eyes (cf.  
 Par. xviii)*

*Cf. Virgil's  
 reference to this  
 shadowy "flesh"  
 of the spirits,  
 Canto iii, 31-  
 33. Also the  
 recognition of  
 Ser Brunetto,  
 Inf. xv*

And not once, as we circle round this way,  
 But many times our penance is renewed.  
 Penance I say, who solace ought to say:  
 For to the tree that same solicitude  
 Leads us, that prompted the glad Christ to cry  
 'Eli,' when he redeemed us with His blood."—  
 "Not yet five years from that day forth," said I,  
 "When for a better world thou tookest flight,  
 Forese mine, have until now rolled by.  
 If sooner ended were in thee the might  
 Of sinning, than the hour had supervened  
 That weds again to God the heart contrite,  
 How then art thou arrived up hither, friend?  
 I thought to find thee on the slope below,  
 Where time doth dissipated time amend."—  
 "My Nella, with her tears that overflow,  
 Hath brought me," he replied, "so speedily  
 To drink of the sweet wormwood of this woe,  
 With pious prayers and tears withdrawing me  
 Up from the hillside where the people wait,  
 And from the other circles setting free.  
 Dearer to God, and of more estimate,  
 My widow whom so well I loved, as there  
 She more alone to good is dedicate.  
 More modest in its dames beyond compare  
 Is the Barbagia of Sardinia,  
 Than the Barbagia where I left her.  
 O brother dear, what wilt thou have me say?  
 My foresight by a future is possessèd,  
 When not yet very old shall be this day,  
 When warning from the pulpit is addrest  
 To the unblushing women Florentine,  
 Who go about displaying paps and breast.  
 What Pagan women, aye, or Saracen,  
 Have stood in need, to make them covered go,  
 Of spiritual or other discipline?

*If you repented  
 only when too  
 weak to sin  
 more. See  
 Belacqua's  
 explanation,  
 Canto iv*

*The stormy voice  
 of the poet-  
 prophet speaks  
 through Forese*

But if these unabashed ones did but know  
What holds in store for them the hastening sky,  
For howling would their jaws be open now;  
For if herein my foresight do not lie,  
They will be sad ere yet his cheek have down  
Who now is quieted with lullaby.  
Now brother, pray, be more concealment none:  
Look, not I only, but these people all  
Are gazing there where veilest thou the sun.”—  
Whence I to him: “If thou to mind recall  
What once to one another were we two,  
The present memory will yet appall.  
That one who goes in front of me withdrew  
Me from that life the other day, when round  
The sister of him yonder appeared to you  
(I pointed to the sun). Through the profound  
Midnight he led me from the dead apart,  
With this real flesh that after him is bound.  
Thence having drawn me, comforts he my heart  
To circle up the Mountain, that again  
Straightens you whom the world had wrenched  
athwart.  
He speaks of going with me until when  
I shall be there where will be Beatrice;  
Without him there must I perforce remain.  
He Virgil is who sayeth to me this  
(And him I showed); that other shadow, know,  
Is he for whom shook every precipice  
Recently, when your Kingdom let him go.”—

## XXIV

## CHEERFUL ABSTAINERS FROM GOOD CHEER

*Third day:  
early afternoon.  
Terrace of the  
Intemperate*

Neither for talking did we lag behind,  
Nor lagged our talk, but stoutly on we went,  
Like vessel urged along by favoring wind.  
And shades that seemed by double death forspent,  
Beholding me alive, were all betraying  
Deep in their eyepits their astonishment.

*We shall meet  
her in the Heav-  
en of the Moon  
(Par. iii)*

I, going on with what I had been saying,  
Said: "Peradventure he doth upward go,  
For sake of some one else, with more delaying.  
But tell, where is Piccarda, if thou know;  
And mention any in this multitude  
Of note, among those gazing at me so."—

*The reader is  
urged to read  
Longfellow's  
notes on this  
lovely canto*

"My sister,—if most beautiful or good  
I know not,—in her crown is triumphing  
On high Olympus in beatitude."—

So said he first, then: "No forbidden thing  
Is giving names here, so obliterate  
Is our resemblance by the dieting.

This," pointed he, "is Bonagiunta, late  
Bonagiunta of Lucca; and farther out,  
That face more, than the rest emaciate,

Once put his arms the Holy Church about;  
He was from Tours, and atones the Vernage wine  
And Lake Bolsena's eels, by doing without."

And many another name did he assign;  
And all seemed pleased, for not one somber look,  
Despite the naming, saw these eyes of mine.

*This Boniface  
was an arch-  
bishop of Ra-  
venna,—not, of  
course, to be con-  
fused with the  
Pope so often  
mentioned*

There saw I bite the void and hunger brook  
Ubaldin of La Pila, and Boniface  
Who shepherded much people with his crook.

I saw Lord Marquess who of old had space  
For drinking with less dryness at Forli,  
With craving still unsated ne'ertheless.



But as he does who scans selectingly,  
 So did my choice on him of Lucca fall,  
 Who seemed most eager to have speech with me.

I heard him murmur, what I know not all,  
 About Gentucca, where he most was wrung  
 By Justice that so withers them withal.

*In his throat*

"O soul," said I, "that seemest so to long  
 To speak with me, give pleasure to my ears  
 And to thy heart by loosening thy tongue."—

"A maid is born, nor yet the wimple wears,  
 Who shall make pleasant to thee," did he say,  
 "My city, whatsoever blame it bears.

*Referring probably to a lady named Gentucca, who had shown some kindness to the Poet in his exile*

With this my presage shalt thou go thy way;  
 And did my murmur error in thee move,  
 Facts will explain it at some future day.

But tell me, do I speak with him who wove  
 The rimes in the new manner, that begin,  
 'Ladies who have intelligence of love'?"—

*A canzone of Dante's "New Life," well translated by Rossetti*

"I am of those who, when Love breathes within,  
 Take note," I answered, "and shape heedfully  
 My cadences to those he dictates in."—

"O brother mine," exclaimed he, "now I see  
 What bar held back from the sweet manner new  
 Guittone, and the Notary, and me.

I see distinctly how your pens pursue  
 The one who dictates, following his bent;  
 The which was certainly of ours untrue.

*Because we did not, like you, pen the dictates of the heart. Cf. the conversation with Oderisi, Canto xi*

And who most looks to find them different,  
 Can naught else trace 'twixt one and the other  
 style;"—

And holding here his peace, he seemed content.

Even as the birds that winter by the Nile  
 Go flocking through the welkin now, then fly  
 With quicker wing that they may go in file,

Thus all that multitude of people I  
 Saw turn their faces, while their steps they pressed,  
 And, light by will and leanness, hastened by.

And, as a weary runner lets the rest  
 Of his companions go, that he may walk  
 Until abate the panting of his chest,  
 So did Forese let the holy flock  
 Pass by, and, pausing with me, said: "When more  
 May we thus face to face together talk?"—  
 "I know not," said I, "when my life is o'er,  
 Though not so speedily can I arrive  
 But that my heart is sooner on the shore;  
 Because the place where I was made alive,  
 More stript of good from day to day, I wiss,  
 To utter ruin is foredoomed to drive."—  
 "Take heart; I see him most to blame for this  
 Dragged at a horse's tail along," said he,  
 "Toward the never pardoning abyss.  
 At each bound goes the beast more rapidly,  
 Ever increasing, till it strikes amain  
 The body, and leaves it mangled hideously.  
 Not often shall those wheels revolve again,"  
 He raised his eyes to heaven, "ere is made clear  
 To thee, that which my words cannot explain.  
 Now stay behind, because the time so dear  
 Is in this kingdom, that too much I lose  
 Going at even pace thus with thee here."—  
 As sometimes cavalier at gallop goes  
 Forth from a troop of horse, to make his worth  
 Renowned by first encounter with the foes,  
 So he with longer strides departed forth;  
 And I remained there with those two behind,  
 Who were such mighty marshals here on earth.  
 And when he had passed on so far that blind  
 To follow him mine eyes grew, as, I trow,  
 To follow on his words had been my mind,  
 Appeared, with many a laden and living bough,  
 Another tree, not very far away,  
 Because my road curved round on it but now.

*Prophecy of the  
 violent death of  
 his brother, the  
 famous Corso  
 Donati*

Beneath were folk with lifted hands, and they  
 Cried out toward the leaves, I know not what,  
 Like fond and eager little ones who pray,  
 And that one whom they pray to answers not,  
 But holds aloft and does not hide their boon,  
 That it may be more longingly besought.  
 Then, as if disappointed, they were gone:  
 So reacht we the great tree that doth deny  
 So many a tear and many an orison.  
 "Go your way onward without drawing nigh;  
 The tree is higher up whence Eve devoured  
 The fruit, and whence this plant was reared on  
 high."—

Thus spoke some one amid the fronds embowered;  
 Whence Virgil, Statius, and I, close pressed  
 Together, moved along the cliff that towered.

"Recall those cloud-begotten ones unblest,  
 Who being drunken," so it re-began,  
 "Strove against Theseus with their double breast;

*The Centaurs*  
*(Ovid, Met. xii)*

Those Jews the draught proved weaklings, man for man, *Judges vii, 4-7*  
 Whence Gideon did their company disdain,  
 When he went down the hills tow'rd Midian."—

Hugging the inner of the margins twain,  
 Concerning sins of appetite we heard,  
 Followed of old by miserable gain.

Then, to a solitary path transferred,  
 A thousand steps and more had each of us  
 Wandered immerst in thought without a word.

"Ye three alone, what go ye thinking thus?"—

I started when a sudden voice so said,  
 As starts from rest a creature timorous.

To see who this might be, I raised my head;  
 And never yet in furnace was the hue  
 Of glass or metal such a glowing red,

As one I saw who spoke: "So please it you  
 To mount aloft, here must ye turn aside:  
 This way goes he who would his peace pursue."—

To look on him was sight to me denied:

Whence turned I in my Teacher's steps to fare,

Like one who goes with hearing for his guide.

And as, from herbs and flowers, the harbinger

Of early dawn, the zephyr of the May

Steals odors that make balmy all the air,

Even such a breeze I felt directly play

Upon my brow, and felt myself caressed

By plumage breathing of ambrosia.

And heard proclaimed thereafter: "They are blest

Whom Grace so much illumines, that appetite

Kindles not overmuch within their breast,

Hungering ever in accord with right."—

XXV

THE MENTAL PHYSIOLOGY OF THE SHADES

Now since the Sun had left the circle of noon  
 To Taurus, and the Night to Scorpio,  
 Henceforward the ascent brookt hindrance none.  
 Wherefore, as people on their journey go  
 And tarry not, whate'er beholding, while  
 The spur of need is urgent on them; so  
 Now one by one we entered the defile,  
 Taking the stairway where the narrow lane  
 Compels the climbers to go single file.  
 And, like the little stork, for flying fain,  
 Lifting its wing, and, daring not to fly  
 From off the nest, letting it droop again;  
 Such, with desire kindled and quencht, was I,  
 And nothing further than the movement made  
 That will to speak is indicated by.  
 "Do thou discharge"—my gentle Father said,  
 Forbearing not, although we swiftly went,  
 "The bow of speech bent to the arrowhead."—  
 Then opened I my mouth, made confident,  
 Beginning: "How can there be withering  
 Of bodies with no need of nourishment?"—  
 "Wouldst Meleager's plight to memory bring,  
 How by a wasting brand he wasted was,  
 This would not seem," said he, "so hard a thing;  
 And wouldst thou call to mind how in the glass  
 Tremble your forms whenever tremble ye,  
 What seems hard would seem lightly brought to  
 pass;  
 But that thy will be satisfied in thee,  
 Lo! here is Statius, whom I call and pray  
 That of thy wounds he now the healer be."—  
 "If here where thou art present I display  
 The eternal view," responded Statius,  
 "Be my excuse I cannot say thee nay.—"

*Third day:  
 mid-afternoon.  
 Ascent to the  
 Seventh Terrace,  
 where the lust of  
 the flesh is burnt  
 away*

Son, if thou well receive,"—began he thus,  
 "And if thy mind consider this my word,  
 'Twill make the 'How' thou askest, luminous.  
 Ne'er drunk up by the thirsty veins, but stored  
 The purest essence of the blood remains,  
 Like viands that thou takest from the board;  
 And power informing in the heart obtains  
 To shape all human organs, being that flood  
 Which, to become them, courses through the veins;  
 Digested still, descends where it is good  
 To leave unsaid; thereafter trickles thence  
 In natural vessel on another's blood,

*The blood of the  
 male is said to  
 be active, that of  
 the female,  
 passive*

Where both together have their confluence.  
 Passive is one,—but the other active, through  
 The perfect place whence pours its influence,  
 Begins to operate when joined thereto,  
 Coagulating, quickening the whole  
 That it for shaping to consistence drew.

*The vegetative  
 soul is the goal  
 of the plant, but  
 only an incident  
 in the progress of  
 the human  
 embryo*

This active principle, become a soul  
 As of a plant (but so far different  
 That it halfway and that is at the goal),  
 Begins to move and to be sentient  
 Like the sea fungus, then to organize  
 The powers whereof it is the rudiment,  
 Dilates, my son, and spreads the force that lies  
 Within the heart of the begetter now,  
 Where Nature would the organs all devise.  
 But how grow child from animal?—That 'How'  
 Seest thou not yet; that is the problem great  
 Which once misled a wiser man than thou,

*Averroes*

Who by his teaching thought to separate  
 Soul from potential intellect, for no  
 Organ he saw thereto appropriate.

*The Prime  
 Mover (God)  
 breathes a soul  
 into the embryo*

Open thy breast to coming truth, and know  
 That when the organizing of the brain  
 Has been completed in the embryo,

Toward it turns the Primal Motor then,  
By Nature's so great art made debonair,  
Breathing new spirit full of power to drain  
Whatever virtue it finds active there  
Into its substance, and one soul there grows,  
Living, and feeling, and of itself aware.  
To make less marvelous what I disclose,  
Consider how the Sun's heat becomes wine,  
Joined to the juice that from the vine outflows.  
This soul from out the flesh doth disentwine  
Whenever Lachesis hath thread no more,  
And latent bears the human and divine:  
So voiceless each and every other power,  
But will and memory and intelligence  
Far keener in their working than before.  
Incontinent the spirit falls propense  
To one or the other shore in wondrous wise,  
And first takes knowledge of its pathway thence.  
Soon as the region round about it lies,  
Virtue informative beams round it there,  
As in the living limbs in shape and size.  
And as, when saturate with rain, the air  
By the refraction of the solar rays  
Is deckt with variegated colors fair,  
Even so upon the circumjacent haze  
A wraithlike form is printed by control  
Of shaping soul that in the region stays;  
And as the flamelet's little aureole  
Follows the fire upon its shifting flight,  
So its new form accompanies the soul.  
Because thus rendered visible, the sprite  
Is called a shade; and organs of each sense  
Fashions thereafter, even to that of sight.  
So thence proceed our words, our laughter thence,  
Thence do we fashion forth the tears and sighs  
Whereof the Mount may give thee evidence.

*The faculties of  
sense mute*

According as desires within us rise

Or feeling, takes the shade configuration:

And this is what occasions thy surprise."—

Now were we come to the last punishment,

And now toward the right-hand were we starting,

And were upon another care intent.

There from the cliffside arrowy flames are darting,

And from the shelf breathes up a blast thereon,

Hurling them back, a pathway thus disparting;

Whence it was needful to go one by one

On the open side, so that I felt dismay

Of burning there, and here of falling down.

"To rein the eyes tight up, along this way,"

My Leader said, "must now be our concern,

Because for little one might go astray."—

*First words of a hymn containing a prayer for purity* Then from among those flames that hotly burn,  
Came singing: "God of clemency supreme!"—  
Which filled me with no less desire to turn;

Then saw I spirits walking through the flame:

Wherefore apportioning my sight I go,

Now looking to my steps, and now at them.

*Words of Mary to the Angel, Luke i, 34* They cried aloud: "A man I do not know!"—  
As soon as they had to the end pursued  
That hymn; then recommenced, with voices low.

*Ovid, Met. ii. Cf. Par. xxi, 32-33* This done, anew they shouted: "In the wood  
Diana stayed and banished Helicë,  
For Venus had deflowered her maidenhood."—

Then recommenced the song; then would it be

The praise of wives and husbands who were pure,

As virtue bids, and married chastity.

And in like mode, methinks, they must endure

The while they burn within the fiery blast:

With diet such as this, with such a cure,

The wound of sin must be healed up at last.



XXVI

DANTE MEETS TWO MODERN PREDECESSORS

While, one before the other, thus we paced  
The border, often the good Master said:  
"Take heed; let not my warning go to waste!"—  
Smote me the Sun on the right shoulder-blade,  
Now glittering throughout the Occident  
And whitening the azure; and I made  
The flame seem ruddier where with it blent  
My shadow; and of such a token I  
Saw many a shade take notice, as they went.  
Such an occasion did they profit by  
For speech of me; and they began to say:  
"His body seems the fiction to belie."—  
Then certain of them, far as in them lay,  
Were making tow'rd me, always with concern  
Never to issue from the fiery way.  
"O pilgrim, who no less, perchance, dost yearn  
To go, though reverent the rest behind,  
Answer me, for in thirst and fire I burn:  
Nor but to me be thy reply confined;  
For greater thirst for it must these beset,  
Than for cold water Ethiopæ or Ind.  
Tell us how formest thou a barrier yet  
Against the Sun, as if thou haddest not  
There entered where the toils of Death benet?"—  
So hailed me one of them; and I, no doubt,  
Had made me known, but that I was intent  
Upon a novel thing that came about:  
For, midway through the burning element,  
Facing this company, a people hied  
Who made me stop to gaze for wonderment.  
I saw there hasten up from either side  
Each shade to kiss a shade, for dalliance  
Unresting, with brief greeting satisfied.

*Terrace of the  
Sensual. Third  
day,—late  
afternoon*

*Not the mere  
eidolon described  
in Canto xxv*

*The "falsa vacca"*  
*of Inf. xii, 13*

So pausing, as their dusky troops advance,  
 Emmet encounters emmet, nose to nose,  
 Their road and fortune to espy, perchance.  
 No sooner does the friendly greeting close,  
 Or ever the first footstep passes by,  
 Strive these to lift up louder cries than those:  
 "Sodom and Gomorrah!" the newcomers cry;  
 The rest: "Pasiphaë enters the cow,  
 So that the bull unto her lust may hie."—  
 As cranes to the Riphæan mountain brow  
 Might fly in part, part to the sandy plain,  
 These shunning frost and those the sun, so now  
 One people goes and one comes on amain,  
 And weeping they return to their first chants  
 And to their more appropriate refrain;  
 And close about me as before advance  
 The very same who had entreated me,  
 With will to listen in their countenance.  
 I, who now twice had seen their urgency,  
 Began to speak: "O spirit brotherhood  
 Secure of peace, whenever it may be,  
 These limbs of mine, neither mature nor crude,  
 Left I down yonder on the earth behind,  
 But bring them here with all their joints and blood.  
 I go hence up to be no longer blind:  
 A Lady is on high who wins us grace  
 Whence through your world I bring my mortal rind.  
 But so may be your fond desire apace  
 Fulfilled, so harbor you the heavenly height  
 Most ample, which is Love's full dwelling place,  
 Tell me, that yet on paper I may write,  
 Who may ye be and what that multitude  
 Behind your backs, and going opposite?"—  
 More stupefied, of more bewildered mood,  
 Is never the hill peasant, if perchance  
 He enter town in rustic garb and rude,

Than every shade became in countenance;  
 But when they did their wonder well restrain  
 (Which in high heart has brief predominance),  
 That one who questioned first, began again:  
 "Blest thou who, that the better thou mayst die,  
 Winnest experience of our domain!  
 That people who went hence, offended by  
 That wherefore Cæsar suffered once the blame  
 When 'Queen!' amidst his triumph rose the cry;  
 Whence in their parting from us, they exclaim  
 'Sodom!' as thou hast heard, in self-despite,  
 And make the burning hotter with their shame.  
 Our own transgression was hermaphrodite;  
 But since we heeded not the human code,  
 Following like the brutes our appetite,  
 Departing, we, in self-reproachful mode,  
 Ourselves pronounce the name of her who so  
 Did bestialize herself in beastlike wood.  
 Our deeds now, how far guilty, knowest thou:  
 Wouldst thou, perchance, by name know who we be,  
 There is no time to tell, nor should I know.  
 I grant, indeed, thy wish concerning me:  
 I'm Guido Guinizelli, purged by fire  
 Through penitence before th' extremity."—  
 As, in the frenzy of Lycurgus' ire  
 Against their mother, the two sons became,  
 Such became I (but do not so aspire),  
 When I had heard himself the father name  
 Of me, and other better men than I,  
 Who sweet and gracious love-rimes used to frame:  
 And reft of hearing I went thoughtfully,  
 Long while agaze at him, and nothing said,  
 Nor for the fire did I approach more nigh.  
 As soon as of beholding I was fed,  
 I offered myself all to do him grace,  
 With such a vow as makes one credited.

*Taunted by his  
ribald soldiery*

*I.e., immoderate  
but not unnatu-  
ral self-indul-  
gence*

*Cf. xi, 97-99*

*He felt as the  
sons felt on  
recognizing their  
mother, but re-  
strained him-  
self more*

And he to me: "Thy words have left a trace  
 Upon my spirit charactered so clear  
 That Lethe cannot dim it nor efface.  
 But if it be a true avouch I hear,  
 What is the cause of thy avowal, pray,  
 By word and look that thou dost hold me dear?"—  
 And I to him: "Your every dulcet lay,  
 Which, if our modern use endure so long,  
 Will render dear their very ink for aye."—  
 "He yonder, brother," back to me he flung  
 With finger pointing to a spirit before,  
 "Was a better shaper of his mother tongue.  
 In love-rimes and romantic tales of yore  
 Surpassed he all, and let fools prate who view  
 Him of Limoges as the superior.  
 They hold by rumor more than by the true,  
 And in that way their fixt opinion mold,  
 Ere art or reason have been listened to.  
 Thus with Guittone many did of old,  
 Basing his praise upon *they say, they say*,  
 Until at length with most the truth controlled.—  
 Now if thou have such charter that the way  
 Into that cloister is vouchsafed to thee  
 Where Christ is abbot of the college, pray  
 A Paternoster unto him for me,  
 As far as here may boot the utterance,  
 Where will to sin remains no longer free."—  
 Then to give place to others who perchance  
 Fast followed him, he vanisht in the fire,  
 As fishes bottomward through water glance.  
 Thereafter I drew forward somewhat nigher  
 To him who had been pointed out, to pray  
 That he vouchsafe his name to my desire.  
 And thus he graciously began to say:  
 "Your courteous request delights me so,  
 I cannot from you, will not, hide away.

*Giraut de  
 Borneil*

I am Arnaut who weep and singing go;  
    Contritely for past folly I repine,  
    And blithely see the hoped-for morning glow.  
I pray you now by Influence Divine  
    That guides you to the summit of the stair,  
    Be timely mindful of this pain of mine."—  
Then hid he in the fire that makes them fair.

*Arnaut Daniel, Provençal poet often referred to by Dante, who gives his words in the Provençal tongue, preserving with exquisite art the rime and cadence*

## XXVII

THE WILL OF THE PILGRIM OF ETERNITY IS  
PURIFIED

*Third and last  
night on the  
Mountain (cf.  
beginning of  
Canto ii)*

As when the earliest rays of dawning quiver  
Where shed His blood the Maker of the light,  
High Libra lamping over Ebro-river,  
And Ganges-wave at noontide burning bright,  
So hung the sun; and day being nearly o'er,  
Appeared to us God's Angel benedight.  
Standing without the flame upon the shore,  
He sang: "Blest they who pure in heart abide!"—  
In voice melodious, than ours far more.  
Then: "No one farther goes, souls sanctified,  
Unbitten by the fire; be thither sped,  
Not deaf to chanting from the farther side."—  
As we drew nearer to him, this he said:  
And, listening, I such became in mien  
As he who in the burial pit is laid.  
Up started I, with clasping hands, and keen  
Glance at the fire, and vivid memory  
Of burning human bodies erewhile seen.  
My kindly Escorts turned about to me,  
And Virgil thus address me: "Son of mine,  
Here is no death, though well may torment be.  
Recall, recall! when layest thou supine  
On Geryon's shoulders, still I safely led;  
And how then now, less far from the Divine?  
What though a thousand years within the bed  
Of this same fire thou didst abide, believe  
It could not hurt a hair upon thy head.  
And if perchance thou deem that I deceive,  
Draw nigh it, and with proper hands assay  
Upon the border of thy garments. Give  
Fear to the wind,—put every doubt away;  
Turn and come hither with security."—  
Yet against conscience did I rooted stay.

Seeing me stand yet rooted stubbornly,  
    "Now look, my son," exclaimed he with a sigh,  
    "There is this wall 'twixt Beatrice and thee."—  
As opened Pyramus his dying eye  
    At name of Thisbe, and gazed at her, while flew  
    Over the mulberry the purple dye;  
So turned I, when my stubbornness withdrew,  
    To my wise Leader, by the name beguiled  
    That ever wells in memory anew.  
Whereon he shook his head at me, and smiled:  
    "What, would we tarry here?"—as when we win  
    With proffered apple an unwilling child.  
Then in advance of me he entered in  
    The fire, entreating Statius to come last,  
    Who for a long way back had been between.  
When I was in, I would have gladly cast  
    Myself in molten glass for solacement,  
    So beyond measure was the burning blast.  
To comfort me, my kindly Father went  
    Ever discoursing but of Beatrice,  
    Saying: "Her eyes seem now upon us bent."—  
Beyond, a voice was singing, and by this  
    Conducted, and to this attentive quite,  
    We issued forth where mounts the precipice.  
"Come, all ye of my Father benedight!"—  
    Rang from within a light there manifest  
    So that I could not look, it was so bright.  
"Night comes," it added, "and goes the sun to rest;  
    Then quicken up your pace and do not stay,  
    While yet not wholly darkened is the west."—  
Straight upward through the rock mounted the way,  
    Directed so that I, before me there,  
    Cut off the sinking sun's last level ray.  
And both I and my Sages grew aware  
    Of sunset, by my shadow vanisht thence,  
    When we had made brief trial of the stair.

And ere within one dim circumference  
     The wide horizon mingled sea and shore,  
     And Night held sway with all her influence,  
 Each of us on a stair was bedded; for  
     The mountain-law deprived us of the will  
     And of the power of there ascending more.  
 Just as, while ruminating, goats grow still,  
     However bold and nimble they had run  
     Over the heights before they browsed their fill,  
 Husht in the shade while blazes hot the sun,  
     Watcht by the herdsman leaning on his rod,  
     Who, leaning thus, attends them every one;  
 And as the shepherd, stretcht upon the sod,  
     Watches by night his quiet flock beside,  
     That no wild beast may scatter it abroad:  
 Even so did we at such an hour abide,  
     I like the goat, they shepherdlike, all three  
     Hemmed in by lofty rock on either side.  
 Little without could there be seen by me;  
     But in that little saw I more intense  
     The stars, and larger than their wont to be.  
 So musing and so gazing, somnolence  
     Fell on me, such as oftentimes before  
     They come about, gives tidings of events.  
 That hour, I think, when through the eastern door  
     First on the mountain Cytherea beams,—  
     Who fired with love seems burning evermore,—  
 A Lady young and fair I saw, in dreams,  
     Who through a meadow land appeared to go  
     Gathering flowers, and singing said, meseems:  
 "If any ask my name, then let him know  
     That I am Leah, and I move alway  
     Fair hands to wreathe myself a garland so.  
 Here at my glass I joy in my array;  
     But never does my sister Rachel rise  
     Up from her mirror where she sits all day.

*Dante's third  
 dream of pres-  
 age: Leah and  
 Rachel,—the  
 Active Life and  
 the Contempla-  
 tive*



She yearns to look in her own lovely eyes,  
As I to deck me with my hands am yearning:  
Her, seeing, and me, doing satisfies."—  
Through splendors of the dawn already burning  
(That rise to pilgrim hearts so much more sweet  
As less remote their hostel, home returning),  
The shades of night were now departing fleet;  
And slumber having with them fled away,  
I rose, seeing my great Masters on their feet.  
"That sweet fruit which, through many a branching spray,  
Ye mortals go seeking with little ease,  
Shall set at peace thy hungerings today."—  
Virgil began to me in words like these,  
And never were there guerdons that could cope  
With suchlike rapture-giving largesses.  
Such longing upon longing for the slope  
Came over me, at every step I could  
Perceive my wings becoming fledged with hope.  
When all the stairs were traversed, and we stood  
Upon the uppermost, did Virgil turn  
His eyes on me with wistful fatherhood;  
"Son, thou hast lookt upon the fire eterne  
And temporal, and comest to a place  
Where, of myself, no further I discern.  
I brought thee here by intellect and grace;  
Henceforth let thy good pleasure guide thy going:  
Thou art beyond the steep, the narrow ways.  
Look how the sun is on thy forehead glowing,  
Look at the grass, the tender shrubs, the bloom  
That here the soil is willingly bestowing.  
Until the lovely eyes rejoicing come,  
Which weeping made me come to lead thee thence,  
Here canst thou sit and canst among them roam.  
Await no more my word or influence:  
Upright is now thy will, and sound, and free,  
And wrong to disobey its bidding: whence  
Lord of thyself I crown and miter thee."—

## XXVIII

## THE EARTHLY PARADISE CROWNING THE MOUNTAIN

*Soon after sunrise on the fourth day. Dante, no longer guided but followed by the two great Masters, is walking on the level upland*

Now eager for exploring the divine  
 Evergreen forest dense, that screened the day,  
 So newly-risen, for these eyes of mine,  
 I leave the mountain-brow without more stay,  
 And slowly, slowly through the plain advance,  
 That everywhere breathes fragrance of the May.  
 A soft air, subject to no variance,  
 Continually stroked me on the brow  
 As lightly as when gentle zephyr fans;  
 And tremblingly responsive, every bough  
 Was bending all its foliage what way  
 The Holy Mount cast the first shadow now;  
 Yet did they not so violently sway  
 That any little bird on topmost limb  
 Was fain forsake the practice of his lay,  
 But might, while chanting the full joy in him,  
 Welcome the breath of morn the leaves among,  
 That ever bore a burden to his hymn:  
 From bough to bough goes gathering such song  
 Through the pine forest on Chiassi's shore,  
 When forth by Æolus Scirocco is flung.  
 So far already through the woodland hoar  
 My lingering feet had borne me, that I knew  
 Where I had entered into it, no more;  
 When lo! a brooklet cut my pathway through,  
 Rippling along toward my left, and bending  
 The grasses that along the margin grew.  
 All waters here in purity transcending,  
 Would seem commingled in comparison  
 With this whose limpid wave conceals no blending,  
 Although it darkly, very darkly run  
 Beneath perpetual shade, unpenetrated  
 Ever by radiance of moon or sun.

*Now Classe, from the Roman name of the port of Ravenna (Classis)*

My footsteps tarried, but mine eyes elated  
Passed to alight beyond the rivulet  
On the fresh May profusely variegated;  
And there appeared (as when a thing is met  
All of a sudden, leading thought to stray  
For the great wonder, and all else forget)  
A Lady, who went her solitary way  
Singing and culling flower from flower, whereof  
The coloring made all her pathway gay.  
I said: "Pray, Lady fair, in rays of love  
Basking, if I may trust thy countenance,  
Which mirror of the heart is wont to prove,  
Now be it thy good pleasure to advance  
Toward the margin of this brook, and sing,  
So that I better understand thy chants.  
In place and mode thou dost to memory bring  
Proserpina, that time when forfeited  
Her mother her, and she herself, the spring."—  
As turns upon the floor with even tread  
A lady in the dance who hardly sets  
Foot before foot, even so above the bed  
Of scarlet and of yellow flowerets,  
She turned to me with maidlike innocence  
And drooping eyes, and to the rivulet's  
Border approaching, did so recompense  
My praying, that the dulcet melody  
Was borne to me, together with the sense.  
When she was where the grass begins to be  
Bathed by the ripples of the beauteous river,  
She raised the guerdon of her eyes on me.  
I think there glowed so bright a luster never  
Beneath the lids of Venus, by her son  
Empierct with dart from his unwilling quiver.  
She smiled, erect upon the margin yon,  
Trailing manifold colors with her hands  
Of flowers upon the highland never sown.

*The Lady  
presaged by the  
dream of Leah,  
as Rachel pres-  
ages Beatrice*

Three steps of river hindered more advance;  
 But Hellespont, where Xerxes passed of yore  
 (A bridle still to all human arrogance),  
 Was never by Leander hated more  
 Because 'twixt Sestos and Abydos swelling,  
 Than that by me for barring passage o'er.  
 "Ye are newcomers," she began her telling,  
 "And so my smiling in this place elect  
 For human nature as a native dwelling,

*Psalm xciii, 4,  
 "Delectasti me,  
 Domine in fac-  
 tura Tua" (Thou,  
 Lord, hast made  
 me glad through  
 Thy work)*

Perchance awakens in you some suspect;  
 But the Psalm *Delectasti* sheds a ray  
 Of light that may discloud your intellect.  
 And thou in front, who didst entreat me, say,  
 Wouldst thou hear more?—By thy solicitude  
 Prompted, I came to do it quite away."—

*See the long note  
 at end of canto*

"The water," said I, "and the murmuring wood  
 Impugn within me new belief, thereto  
 In contradiction, as I understood."—  
 Whence she: "How from their proper cause ensue  
 The things occasioning thy wonderment,  
 Will I declare and purge thy inward view.  
 The Good Supreme, sole in itself content,  
 Created man for good, and peace eterne  
 Pledged him by giving him this tenement.  
 Here, by his fault, short while did he sojourn;  
 By his own fault, to travail and to woe  
 Did innocent joy and pleasant pastime turn.  
 That the disturbances produced below  
 By exhalations of the land and sea  
 (That after heat, as far as may be, go)  
 Might wage no war upon humanity,  
 Rose heavenward up so high this mountain here,  
 And is above the guarded gateway free.  
 Now since, in circuit with the primal sphere,  
 The universal air is rolling round,  
 While it remains unbroken anywhere,

This motion strikes the summit, disembound  
In living ether all, and makes the dense  
Forest, being a thicket, to resound.  
Within the smitten plant has residence  
Power to impregn the breeze, and this henceforth,  
In whirling, sheds abroad that influence.  
Conceived and childed so on yonder earth  
Are various trees of virtue various,  
According as its clime and soil have worth.  
Rightly considering the matter thus,  
That without visible seed some plants take root  
In yonder earth, should not seem marvelous.  
And thou must know that where thou setst thy foot  
The holy upland every seed contains,  
And never yonder can ye pluck such fruit.  
The water that thou seest wells not from veins  
Which vapors, by the cold condensed, restore,  
Like river that now loses breath, now gains,  
But from a fountain constant evermore;  
And will divine replenishes that source  
By all that forth its double rivers pour.  
On this side, it flows downward with the force  
That takes man's memory of sin away;  
The other, that of all good done, restores.  
It is called Lethë here, as Eunoë  
On the other side, nor doth the working speed  
Till of the taste of both ye make assay.  
This every other savor doth exceed.  
Now, though thy thirst may be so satisfied  
That of more telling there be little need,  
A corollary will I grant beside,  
Nor deem I the less dear to thee my granting,  
If it beyond the pact be amplified.  
Who anciently the golden age were chanting,  
And its felicity, about this place  
Dreamt peradventure, while Parnassus haunting.

*The Poet must  
sometime have  
dwelt by a  
torrent near its  
source in the  
mountain snow,  
which, melting  
in the sun and  
freezing at  
night, keeps  
the breast of  
the stream  
summer-long  
swelling and  
subsiding*

Here without guile took root the human race;  
 Here is all fruitage, here the prime unbroken;  
 This is the nectar they unite to praise."—  
 Then looking to my Poets for a token,  
 I noted how with smiling mien they brooked  
 The parable that lastly had been spoken;  
 Then to the Lady fair again I looked.

Note

This is one of the many cantos wherein Dante tries to rib his poetry with positive science,—unscientific as much of it proves to be.

In *Canto* xxi, ll. 40-57, Statius had explained to Dante that above the Gateway of Purgatorio proper,—the uppermost of the three mystic steps whereon the Vicar of Peter has his feet,—there is no earthquake, nor rain nor hail nor mist, in short, no climatic alteration or meteorological change, such as the lower parts of the mountain, being purely natural, are subject to. Here, however, Dante sees a running stream, feels a breeze upon his brow, hears a sighing in the forest whose leaves and sprays are all bent toward the west under the steady stress of the eastern tradewind. All this appears to contradict what Statius had told him, so that he is full of doubt and wonder. Accordingly when the beautiful Lady (Matilda, *Canto* xxxiii, l. 119) invites him to ask questions, he begs her to explain this contradiction.—The substance of her explanation is as follows: "My smiling is explained by the Ninety-second Psalm, 'For Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through Thy work.'" As to the wind (ll. 97-99), "this passage," says Moore, "describes the exemption of the Earthly Paradise from the storms generated on the lower earth by the exhalations which, proceeding from the water and the earth, rise as far as they can, following the heat by which such exhalations are drawn up." (*Studies in Dante*, I, 131.) Here, as everywhere, Dante followed the science of his time, which itself followed Aristotle's *Meteorologica*. But the wind here on the upper mountain is due to a very different cause: the revolution of the Primum Mobile (Milton's "that first moved," *Par. Lost*, B. iii, 483), *la prima volta*, or first moving sphere. It is this that, carrying with it the upper air from east to west around the stationary earth, causes the steady current or tradewind which bends the leaves all one way and makes the forest murmur like that on Classe's shore (*la Pineta di Ravenna*). As to the water:—In many places (e.g., *Purg.* *Canto* v, ll. 109-123; *Canto* xiv, ll. 31-36) Dante deals with the action of the moisture in the air, forever replenishing the rivers at their sources in the mountains. But here the two streams, Lethæ and Eunoë, issue at two sides from a fountain, steady and sure, that is constantly fed by direct interposition of the Will of God. Thus Dante's doubts are solved, but the Lady volunteers a "corollary," identifying the Earthly Paradise with the Age of Gold of the Poets, two of whom are present and are pleased.

XXIX

THE MYSTIC PROCESSION OF THE CHURCH  
TRIUMPHANT

The Lady, in the manner of a lover,  
Resumed her singing, when her words were done:  
"Blessed are they whose sins are covered over."—  
And as the nymphs were wont to go alone  
Among the woodland shadows, with endeavor  
Some to behold, some to avoid the sun,  
She then, against the current of the river,  
Followed the bank, and I with her abreast,  
Brief paces with brief paces matching ever.  
Between us not a hundred steps were paced,  
When both alike the margins made a bend,  
So that toward the East again I faced.  
Nor yet, so going, had we far to wend  
Before the Lady fully turned about  
Toward me, saying: "Look, brother, and attend."—  
And lo! a sudden luster ran throughout  
Every quarter of the forest vast,  
So that of lightning I was put in doubt.  
But since the lightning, as it comes, is past,  
And this still brightened more and more the wood,  
"What thing is this?"—within my thought I cast.  
Then did a melody delightful flood  
The illumined air, whence holy ardor made  
Me fain to reprobate Eve's hardihood;  
For there, where both the Earth and Heaven obeyed,  
The woman only, and but just created,  
Would underneath not any veil be stayed;  
Whereunder, had she but devoutly waited,  
So should I that ineffable content  
Have sooner had, and had it unabated.  
While I amid so many first-fruits went,  
Of the eternal joy, and all upstrung,  
And evermore on greater joyance bent,

*Vulgate Psalm  
xxxi, 1, "quorum  
tecta sunt  
peccata"*

In front of us, the verdant boughs among,  
The air as if by fire enkindled grew,  
And the sweet sound was now perceived as song.  
O holy Virgins! now did I for you  
Hunger or cold or vigils never shun,  
Need goads me to implore the guerdon due.  
Pour forth for me thy waters, Helicon,  
Urania sustain me with thy chorus,  
To put in rime things hard to think upon!  
The wide tract of the middle distance bore us  
The show of seven trees of gold, not far  
Beyond, in false presentment there before us;  
But when so near approacht to them we are,  
That common traits which lead the senses wrong  
Forfeit by distance no particular,  
The force that makes discourse of reason strong  
Perceived at length that candlesticks were they,  
And heard "Hosannah" in voices of the song.  
Aloft was flaming now the fair array,  
Far brighter than the Moon who lamps the skies  
At midnight in her monthly course midway.  
Thereon I turned about with wild surmise  
To the good Virgil, who thereto replied  
With like amazement in his startled eyes.  
Thence turning back my vision, I descried  
Those high things moving on to us so slow  
They would have been outstript by the new bride.  
The Lady chided me: "Why yearning so  
Only to gaze upon each living light,  
That what comes after them thou dost forgo?"  
Then, as behind their leaders, came to sight  
A people in white raiment,—never seen  
Was here upon the earth so pure a white.  
The water on my left was full of sheen,  
Reflecting back the left-hand side of me  
As in a mirror, when I lookt therein.



When I had gained such place upon the lea  
 That separated me the brook alone,  
 I stayed my steps, the better thus to see,  
 And saw the flamelets forward move, a zone  
 Of painted air behind them leaving, so  
 That they appeared like painters' brushes drawn;  
 And thus the air above remained aglow  
 With seven stripes, containing every hue  
 Of Delia's girdle and Apollo's bow.  
 These pennons farther than my range of view  
 Were streaming rearward; by my estimate  
 Ten steps asunder were the outer two.  
 Under so fair a sky as I relate,  
 By two and two came Elders twenty-four,  
 Their brows with flower-de-luce incoronate.  
 They all were singing: "Blessed thou before  
 The daughters all of Adam; blessed be  
 Thy loveliness forever and evermore."—  
 Now when no more the chosen company  
 Footed the flowers and tender herbage seen  
 Upon the margin opposite to me,  
 As follows light on light in the serene  
 Heaven, came after them four living things,  
 Each one incoronate with frondage green.  
 Every one was feathered with six wings  
 Studded with eyes; the eyes of Argus thus,  
 If living, might be full of visionings.  
 I lavish no more verses to discuss  
 Their form, O Reader! other charges bind  
 So, that perforce I am penurious.  
 But read Ezekiel, and call to mind  
 How he beheld them from the quarter cold  
 With cloud approaching, and with fire and wind;  
 As thou shalt find it in his pages told,  
 Such were they,—save as to their pinions, John  
 Varies from him, and with the saint I hold.

*The lunar and  
solar spectrum*

*Books of the  
Old Testament*

*The Gospels*

*The Gryphon  
who draws the  
Car of the  
Church typifies  
the union of the  
Divine and the  
human in the  
Saviour. The  
middle stripe of  
the seven colors  
is between his  
wings*

Within the space among those four came on,  
Triumphal, rolling on two wheels, a Wain  
That forward by a Gryphon's neck was drawn.  
Up he extended both his wings between  
The middle striping and the three and three,  
That none took hurt from being cleft amain.  
How high they rose no human eye could see;  
Where he is bird his limbs of gold are wrought,  
The others white, but mingled ruddily.  
With car so beautiful Rome honored not  
Or Scipio or even Augustus,—nay,  
Poor were the Sun's to such a chariot,  
The chariot of the Sun which, driven astray,  
Was burnt at Earth's devoted orison,  
When Jove was just in his mysterious way.  
At the right wheel, in dance came whirling on  
Three ladies: one of such a ruddy glow  
As haply in the fire were seen of none;  
Such flesh and frame the second one did show  
As out of emerald she had been made;  
The third appeared like freshly fallen snow.  
Now by the white appeared they to be led,  
Now by the ruddy lady, by whose lay  
The others timed their swift or tardy tread.  
Beside the left wheel four made holiday  
In purple raiment, following as guide  
One in whose head three eyes lookt every way.  
Behind all those described thus, I descried  
Two aged men clad with a difference,  
But like in bearing grave and dignified.  
One seemed adept in the experiments  
Of high Hippocrates, whom Nature made  
For th' animals she holds in preference;  
The other, who was carrying a blade  
Gleaming and sharp, showed care so opposite  
That, though this side the stream, I was afraid.

*Love*

*Hope*

*Faith*

*Guided by Pru-  
dence, who sees  
past, present,  
future*

*The beloved  
physician,  
St. Luke*

*St. Paul*

Thereafter saw I four of humble plight;  
And behind all an aged man alone  
Walking in trance, but yet acute of sight.  
These seven, like the company first shown,  
Were habited in white; yet not like those  
Around the forehead wore a lily crown,  
But rather flowers of crimson, and the rose:  
Onlooker would have sworn, if near them not,  
That they were all aflame above their brows.  
When over against me was the Chariot,  
Thunder was heard; whereby that worthy band  
Was interdicted further march, methought,  
There with the vanward ensigns brought to stand.

*Minor Epistles  
and Apoca-  
lypse (Revela-  
tion of St.  
John the  
Divine)*

## XXX

## THE REPROACHES OF BEATRICE

*See the long  
note at the end  
of this canto*

*The symbolical  
Seven Candle-  
sticks guided as  
Charles's Wain  
here guides the  
mariner*

When the Septentrion of highest Heaven  
That set or rising never knew, nor pall  
Of any cloud save that of sin, had given  
To every creature there processional  
Such due direction as is ever sought  
From that below by homing pilots all,—  
When that stood still, the people true of thought  
First come 'twixt Gryphon and Septentrion,  
As to their peace turned to the Chariot.  
“Come with me, with me, Bride, from Lebanon,”  
Cried one like Messenger from Heaven, in song  
Thrice over, and so the others every one.  
And as the blest, when the last trump has rung,  
Shall each rise lightly from the funeral urn  
With Hallelujah on requickened tongue,  
So on the Car Divine did I discern  
A hundred at such Elder's call upstand,  
Angels and ministers of life eterne.  
“Blessed be thou that comest!” cried that band,  
Filling the air with flowers along the way,  
“O give ye lilies all with liberal hand!”—  
How often have I seen at break of day  
The region of the East all roseate,  
And else the limpid sky in fair array,  
While overshadowing mists so mitigate  
The rising splendor that these eyes of ours  
Encounter it awhile with gaze sedate,—  
So in the bosom of a cloud of flowers  
Flung in the air and drifting to the ground  
From the angelic hands in blossom showers,  
In veil of white, with olive fillet crowned,  
Appeared to me a Lady in mantle green,  
With color of living flame invested round.

And to my spirit that so long had been  
    Out of her presence, which did ever move  
    Me to stand trembling and abasht of mien,  
Virtue descending through her from above  
    Attested, without witness of the eye,  
    The great tenacity of early love.  
No sooner smote my sight the virtue high  
    Which had already pierct me through the breast  
    Before my early boyhood had gone by,  
Than to the left as trustfully I pressed  
    As to the mother does the child, distraught  
    By terror or by grief, to manifest  
To Virgil: "In my pulses beats no jot  
    Of blood that does not quiver; I perceive  
    The early flame beneath the ashes hot."—  
But gone was Virgil, leaving me to grieve,  
    Virgil, to me a father passing dear,  
    Virgil from whom salvation I retrieve,  
Nor all that lost our ancient mother here  
    Availed to keep my cheeks, though cleansed with dew,  
    From being stained again with many a tear.  
"Dante, because Virgilius withdrew,  
    Do not weep yet, not yet a-weeping fall:  
    Another sword has yet to pierce thee through"—  
As stands at stern or prow an admiral  
    To inspect the service, and to cheer the men  
    Upon the other ships to prowess all,  
At the left margin of the chariot,—when  
    I turned about on hearing mine own name  
    Which here indeed I cannot choose but pen,—  
I saw the Lady, she before who came  
    Veiled underneath the angelic festival,  
    Direct her eyes to me across the stream.  
Though, circled with Minerva's coronal,  
    The ample veil descending from her head  
    Gave forth but faint glimpse of her form, withal

Austerely, and with queenly bearing dread  
 Continued she, as who in saying this  
 Still left the hottest utterance unsaid:  
 "Look at us well, we are, we are Beatrice;  
 How didst thou deign to come unto the Mount?  
 Knewest thou not that man is here in bliss?"—  
 Mine eyes fell down into the limpid fount,  
 But seeing myself reflected, did I turn  
 Back to the lawn again with bashful front.  
 As to the child appears the mother stern,  
 So she appeared to me; for bitter food  
 Is pity, and tart in flavor, though it yearn.  
 She held her peace, and the angel multitude  
 Chanted: "In Thee, Lord, do I put my trust,"  
 But beyond "set my feet" did not conclude.  
 As, on the back of Italy, the gust  
 Slavonic doth the living rafters sheathe  
 With drifted snow soon frozen to a crust,  
 Which melts and trickles down if only breathe  
 The land where shrink the shadows, and appears  
 Like wax that liquefies the flame beneath,—  
 So I remained with neither sighs nor tears  
 Before the song of them who chanting go  
 After the notes of the eternal spheres.  
 But when I heard their tuneful pity flow  
 More sweetly than as if it were exprest:  
 "Lady, why dost thou break his spirit so?"—  
 The ice that was about my heart comprest,  
 To breath and water changing, gusht forth hot  
 Through lips and eyes with anguish from my breast.  
 Still from the same side of the Chariot,  
 Turned she to that compassionate array  
 Her words, her attitude yet moving not:  
 "Ye keep your watch through the eternal day  
 So that nor night nor slumber robs from you  
 One step the world may walk along its way;

*Psalm xxx, 1-8*

Thus to my answer greater heed is due  
That yonder weeper understand me, whence  
Of equal measure may be guilt and rue.  
By work not only of the wheels immense  
Guiding all seeds toward their destined places  
According as the stars rain influence,  
But by the guerdon of celestial graces,  
Which have so lofty vapors for their showers  
That nevermore our sight their fountain traces,  
Such, virtually, was this friend of ours  
In his new life, that issue marvelous  
Was to be lookt for from his native powers.  
But all the wilder and more mischievous  
Is an unweeded garden grown to seed,  
The more the soil is rank and vigorous.  
Whiles I sustained him with my face indeed,  
The light of my young eyes upon him turning;  
And tow'rd right issues followed he my lead.  
When I had crossed my second threshold, spurning  
That earthly life, the heavenly to inherit,  
Then he forsook me for another yearning.  
So, when arisen out of flesh to spirit,  
Waxing in beauty and in worth, I grew  
Less precious to his mind, and of less merit;  
And his feet wandered by a way not true  
After false images of good, pursuing  
Promises unredeemed with payment due.  
To summon him away from his undoing,  
The invocation of no dream or vision  
Availed to me,—so little was he ruing.  
He fell so low, no means for the remission  
Of sin in him yet in my power was lying,  
Save showing him the people of perdition.  
For this I gained the portal of the dying,  
And to that one who led him here were spoken  
My supplications mingled with my sighing.

High fiat of the Almighty would be broken  
 Were he to traverse Lethë without scoring  
 Due payment of such viand, certain token  
 Of deep repentance with hot tears outpouring.”—

*Note*

No sooner has the divine Chariot come to a standstill, than there arise upon it a hundred ministers and messengers of eternal life, singing and flinging up a cloud of flowers, in the midst of which appears to the poet a Lady clad in the tricolor of the Christian virtues. Her robe is of the hue of living flame, and her mantle green, but of these the poet seems only to have a glimpse, for she is all shrouded in a white veil flowing down from the head where it is filleted with the frond of Minerva,—the olive garland, symbol of wisdom and peace. His pulses all astir with the tokens of the old flame (*veteris vestigia flammæ*), the poet turns to share the transport with his wise guide, his beloved father; but Virgil, who has never failed him in distress, is not permitted to be a partaker of his joy. With a subtle suggestion of man's first forfeiture of Paradise, the poet betrays a pathetic weakness, making us aware that even in this supreme moment of revelation and attainment, his strongest sentiment is that of regret for his lost master. A great flood of human feeling rolls over him, the “light of higher eyes” is darkened, and he yearns backward even as Orpheus did after the vanishing shade of his Eurydice.

This is the most humanly significant moment in the poem. Virgil signifies for him all grace of art, all serenity of reason, all human amenity,—all that the Parthenon typifies in contradistinction from the Cathedral of the Christian. It is not without a pang that the poet can give up all this, even at the moment of the fulfillment of his unexampled quest, even now when he stands at last in the presence of Beatrice. Probably many readers will share Dante's sense of bereavement in the loss of the gentle Pagan Sage.

At this moment when his face is darkened with tears of vain regret, in the hush of song, in the lull of the angelic festival, a woman's voice, terrible in its sweetness, stabs him with his name, as with premonitory sting of the sword by which his tears are yet to flow:

“Dante, because Virgilius withdrew,  
 Do not weep yet, not yet a-weeping fall:  
 Another sword has yet to pierce thee through.”—

Henceforth, in this and the following canto, images of war predominate. The Lady's attitude is one of command,—like an admiral she stands on the left or Old-Testament side of the Chariot. The warm color of her inner vestment is now wholly shrouded by the long flowing white veil, through which he can divine her form as through a glass darkly. There is some cheer in the touch of green (*fior del verde*) in the olive garland; love being hidden, he must make the best of faith and hope. With queenly sternness, like one who



keeps back her hottest words, she bids him look well at her as she declares herself by name:

"I am indeed Beatrice!"

Dante! Beatrice! It was not thus he had dreamed in the New Life that her name should be linked with his!—With superb irony, referring to his besetting sin of pride, she demands:

"How didst thou deign to come unto the Mount?"

Instead of looking at her as she bids, he lets fall his eyes, but seeing his shamefast features reflected in the clear brook, he is fain to turn them to the grassy margin, where they rest upon the color of Hope.

Taking advantage of a pause, the Angels now intone the Psalm, "In Te, Domine, speravi,"—"In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust" (Ps. xxxi), or in the Catholic version of the Vulgate (Ps. xxx), "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped."

The divine compassion of the angel voices melts all the ice which had congealed about the heart of Dante, who is seized with an agony of contrite tears. This passion of tears is emphasized by the sublime similitude of the freshet from the snowy Apennines. It is a narrow criticism which has pronounced this similitude to be "too elaborate." Its elaboration is calculated, like everything else in this poem, to support the design. Perhaps this is the only long poem in literature in which all the decoration subserves a structural purpose. The matter is so important that it must here be dwelt upon for a moment.

Dante, Virgil, Beatrice, each one alongside of the personal and the human, symbolizes a whole system of ideas. Virgil represents that partial vision of truth which it may be given to human philosophy to attain. Beatrice represents that seeing of God face to face, that perfect revelation of truth, which to the thought of the poet is summed up in the word Theology. The nebula of ideas of which the man Dante is the type is nothing less than the whole sinful but aspiring nature of man stumbling on the altar steps that lead from Nature up to the highest possible knowledge. From his brow the seven P's, each emblematic of a whole category of sins, have been erased one by one by the angels who guard the successive cornices by which he has climbed the mountain that straightens those whom the world made crooked (Canto xxiii, l. 126). But the merely formal cancellation of sin typified by this action does not satisfy the conscience. Divine Justice requires a deeper participation,—a breaking up of the ice about the heart,—what Protestant Theology was afterward to emphasize as Conversion. Hence before the final rite of immersion in Lethæ, which is to blot out, not sin merely, but the very remembrance of sin, Beatrice must sharply recall to Dante's mind his offenses against her, in order that he may make confession before men and angels with every evidence of contrition. The confession which Dante so solemnly makes is by no means merely symbolic, but truly personal: hence the necessity of recording his own name. He is about to partake of that "sweet oblivious antidote" which shall

"Purge the stuff bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart."

and in making this pathetic confession he is performing the most spiritually consoling act of his life. The importance then of the inward breaking up as preliminary to all outward, formal absolution cannot be too strongly emphasized.

It was Dante's purpose, as is shown by his letter to Can Grande, to blend in his poem the personal and human experience with the universal. Nowhere more than in this canto is the allegory fused with the personal fact. All is personal and all is symbol. This canto and the next form together a personal record of thrilling spiritual significance. Here the allegorical mode in art reaches its utmost height. One may perhaps feel that the delineation of Virgil is on the whole more sympathetic than his delineation, after this point and throughout the *Paradiso*, of Beatrice. So one may prefer the marble splendor and pure symmetry of the Parthenon to the pinnacles and dim religious light of the Cathedral. A liberal criticism will recognize in each an ultimate outreach of human faculty. Dante's art is incomparably more ample than that of the Cathedral builders, who render perfectly the terrors and mysteries of religion, but in the matter of human interest fall into the grotesque. Dante's classic taste keeps the grotesque within bounds, so that he is able more than they, and more than any other artist, to render the beauty of holiness, while never getting away too far from human nature and experience, necessarily the subjects of all acceptable art.

XXXI

DANTE'S BITTER CONFESSION

"O thou who art yon side the sacred river,"  
 Aiming her speech at me by thrust, that through  
 The cutting edge alone had made me quiver,  
 Pursuing without truce began she anew,—  
 "To such a heavy charge is requisite  
 Thine own confession: speak, speak, is it true?"—  
 So great the perturbation of my wit,  
 Though my tongue moved, it was with such delay  
 That first my voice had died away on it.  
 Granting short shrift, she urged: "What dost thou say?  
 Answer me, for the memories that gnaw  
 Are not yet by the water purged away."—  
 Together intermingled shame and awe  
 Constrained my lips to shape forth such a "Yes"  
 As could be heard only by her who saw.  
 As crossbow, tightened up with too great stress,  
 Is shattered when the arrow forth is flung,  
 Which strengthless from the target falls, no less  
 Was I beneath this heavy charge unstrung,  
 Pouring forth tears and sighs, and so undone  
 The faltering voice was slow upon my tongue.  
 "In thy desires of me that led thee on  
 To love the Good Supreme," then did she say,  
 "Beyond which aspiration there is none,  
 What thwarting trenches or what cables lay  
 Across the avenue of thy advance,  
 That thou hadst need to strip thy hope away?  
 And what allurements in the countenance  
 Of others, or what advantage didst thou spy  
 That thou shouldst linger for their dalliance?"—  
 After the heaving of a bitter sigh  
 My lips for utterance were almost sealed  
 And with great effort shaped out a reply.

*The cutting edge  
 that made Dante  
 quiver is the  
 intolerably sweet  
 and unsparring  
 review of his  
 life in the fore-  
 going address of  
 Beatrice to the  
 angels*

Weeping I murmured: "Present things that yield  
Fallacious joy, allured my steps aside  
Soon as your countenance became concealed."—  
And she: "Hadst thou been silent, or denied  
What is confest, the record would allege  
Thy guilt no less, by such a Judge descried.  
But when the sinner's scarlet cheeks are pledge  
Of self-accusal, in our Court and Fane  
The grindstone is whirled back to blunt the edge.  
Howbeit, in order that thou now sustain  
Shame for thy fault, and be of stouter soul  
When thou shalt hear the Sirens sing again,  
Awhile the sowing of thy tears control,  
And hearken how my flesh when laid away  
Ought to have led thee to the counter-goal.  
Never did Nature, never Art convey  
Such rapture to thee as those features fair  
That held me, and are scattered in decay,  
And if my dying left thy soul so bare  
Of joy supreme, what mortal hankerings  
Ought ever have allured to baser care?  
At the first shaft of perishable things  
Thou oughtest truly to have soared aloof  
With me from such concern; nor should thy wings  
Have been weighed downward to abide the proof  
Of further strokes, whether of dainty maid  
Or other vanity of brief behoof.  
For two or three the fledgling may be stayed,  
But in the sight of the full-plumaged bird  
Vainly the bolt is sped or net is laid."—  
As children stand abasht without a word,  
But listening with eyes upon the ground,  
Conscious and sorry for the fault incurred,  
So stood I; and she said: "Since thou hast found  
Pain in the hearing, lift thy beard,—thou must  
Receive, by looking, yet more grievous wound."—

With less reluctance is an oak robust  
     Wrencht up by gale that scours across the sprays  
     From Libia, or stricken by our Alpine gust,  
 Than did I at her word my chin upraise;  
     And when by "beard" invited to the viewing,  
     Full well I felt the venom of the phrase.  
 And my uplifted eyes, their gaze renewing,  
     Plainly distinguisht those primordial creatures  
     How they were pausing from their blossom-strewing;  
 And these mine eyes, as yet uncertain teachers,  
     Showed Beatrice turned to the Animal  
     That is one single Person in two natures.  
 Beneath her veil, beyond the stream withal,  
     She seemed beyond her ancient self to go  
     More than outwent she here the others all.  
 The nettle of remorse there prickt me so  
     That what once most with love seductive drew  
     Now most of all things seemed to be my foe.  
 Such self-conviction gnawed my conscience through,  
     I fell undone; what then upon me passed,  
     That knows she best who gave me cause thereto.  
 When heart revived my outward sense at last,  
     Appeared the Lady whom I had found alone,  
     Above me, saying: "Hold fast to me, hold fast!"—  
 Me throat-high in the river had she drawn,  
     And, haling me behind her, was she light  
     As any shuttle o'er the water gone.  
 When I drew nigh the margin benedight,  
     "Purge me," so sweetly did I hear the sound,  
     Remember it I cannot, much less write.  
 The Lady fair then put her arms around  
     My head, and plunged me under, so embraced,  
     Till fain to drink the water; then she crowned  
 The whole by leading me, thus rendered chaste,  
     Within the measure of the lovely Four,  
     Who each with guarding arm my shoulder graced.

*Matilda draws  
 Dante through  
 Lethë, which  
 takes away  
 grievous re-  
 membrance of  
 personal sin*

"Here we are nymphs, and stars in Heaven; before  
 Beatrice down to life on earth had gone,  
 We were ordained each one her servitor.  
 We lead thee to her eyes; but those three yon,  
 Whose vision searches with profounder quest,  
 Will sharpen to their jocund light thine own."—  
 So first they sang; then to the Gryphon's breast  
 Led me along with them; and at that spot  
 Toward us turned, was Beatrice at rest.  
 "Take heed," said they, "to spare thy gazing not;  
 Thou art before the emeralds at last,  
 Whence Love of yore his arrows at thee shot."—  
 A thousand ardors, hotter than fire blast,  
 Held mine eyes fixed upon the eyes ashine  
 Which were in turn upon the Gryphon cast.  
 The Animal wherein two natures twine  
 Was gleaming there,—so in mirror gleams the sun,—  
 Now in the human, now in the divine.  
 Think, Reader, how I marveled, seeing yon  
 The Creature standing, as if inanimate,  
 Yet being transmuted in its eidolon!  
 While yet both full of wonder and elate,  
 My soul was breaking fast upon the food  
 That quenching causes thirst insatiate,  
 The other Three came forth, their attitude  
 In dancing their angelic roundelay  
 Approving them to be of nobler brood.  
 "Turn, Beatrice, O turn," so ran their lay,  
 "Thy holy eyes upon thy servant leal  
 Who moved his steps to thee from far away.  
 Of thy grace to us, graciously reveal  
 Thy smile to him, so that he may discern  
 The second beauty which thou dost conceal."—  
 O splendor of the living light eterne,  
 What dreaming poet ever has so paled  
 In shadow of Parnassus, or at its urn

*Dante sees the  
 mystery of the  
 union of the  
 human with the  
 divine nature,  
 not directly, but  
 reflected in the  
 emerald eyes of  
 Beatrice*

So drunken, that his heart would not have failed  
    Endeavoring to render thee, how fair,  
    Beneath the harmony of heaven unveiled  
When opening thy beauty to the air?

## XXXII

## ALLEGORY OF THE EVIL DAYS OF THE CHURCH

*Vision seen in  
the Earthly  
Paradise on the  
morning of the  
fourth day*

So steadfast and attentive was my eye  
To satisfy my thirst decennial,  
All other sense did in abeyance lie;  
And so her holy smiling made me fall  
In the old toils, that my indifference  
Inclosed me on every side as with a wall;

*Too intense  
personal vision  
reproved by the  
Church. Possi-  
ble reference to  
the traces of the  
early flame  
(xxx, 48)*

When force perforce my sight was shifted thence  
Tow'rd my left hand by those Divinities,  
Because I heard from them a "Too intense!"—  
And that condition of the sight, which is  
In eyes but lately smitten by the sun,  
Canceled awhile my vision after this.  
But when my sight was for the less rewon  
(The less compared with that superior  
Splendor from which perforce I had withdrawn),  
Turned on the right flank face about, once more  
The glorious army stood to me revealed  
With sun and with the seven flames before.  
As changes front, 'neath cover of the shield,  
A squadron with the standard, while yet not  
The body of the army can have wheeled,  
The knighthood of the heavenly realm that brought  
The van up, all had wheeled and passed us by  
Ere the front beam had turned the Chariot.  
Back to the wheels did then the damsels hie,  
Whereat the Gryphon moved his blessed charge  
So that no feather of him shook thereby.'

*Behind the right  
wheel of the Car*

The Lady fair who drew me to the marge,  
And Statius and I fell in withal  
Behind the wheel that curved with arc less large;  
And thus, while passing through the forest tall,  
Void by her fault who pledged the Snake amiss,  
Our feet to angel music timed their fall.



Three flights might carry along as far as this  
    An arrow, haply, loosened from the string:  
    At such remove alighted Beatrice.  
I heard them one and all there murmuring  
    "Adam?"—then circled they about a tree  
    Bare on each bough of bloom and burgeoning.  
Its foliage, which spreads accordingly  
    As it is towering upward, would for height  
    To Indians in their woods a marvel be.  
"Blest art thou Gryphon, that thou dost not smite  
    With beak this tree that to the taste is sweet,  
    For anguish follows on such appetite."—  
So round the sturdy tree the rest repeat;  
    Whereat the Animal of natures two:  
    "Thus to fulfill all justice it is meet."—  
And, turning to the wagon-pole, he drew  
    It up beneath the widowed trunk,—whereon  
    That which came from it left he bound thereto.  
Even as, when falls the great light of the sun  
    Downward, commingled with that radiance far  
    Which beams behind the heavenly Carp, anon  
Burgeon our trees, and each its singular  
    Color renews, before the sun has set  
    Yoke on his coursers under other star:  
So did the tree, of fronds so naked yet,  
    Revive and open out into a hue  
    Less than of rose and more than violet.  
What hymn that throng then sang, I never knew,—  
    A matter not intoned in human chants,—  
    Nor could I bear the melody all through.  
O could I picture sinking into trance  
    Those cruel eyes, of Syrinx hearing tell,  
    Those eyes that paid so dear long vigilance,  
Into what drowsihood hereon I fell,  
    Like painter from the life would I portray:  
    Who would, must know to image slumber well.

*Tree of Knowledge. The cross, whereof the wain-pole is symbol, was fabled to be of the wood of this tree*

*This tree, grafted with the cross, blossoms anew, as in spring when the sun is in the Ram just behind the sign of the Fishes, our trees renew verdure and bloom*

*The tale with which Hermes lulled Argus*

Whence pass I to my waking, and I say  
 A dazzling splendor rent the veil from me  
 Of slumber, and a calling: "Rise, why stay?"—  
 As, to see blossoms of the apple tree  
 That makes the angels eager to be fed,  
 And marriage feasts in Heaven eternally,  
 Peter and James and John were upward led,  
 And, overcome, recovered at the word  
 Of Him who broke the slumbers of the dead,  
 And saw their band to what it was restored  
 By loss of Moses and Elias too,  
 And changed again the raiment of the Lord;  
 So I recovered, and so did I view

*Matilda*

*Theology left to  
 guard the  
 Church, sur-  
 rounded by the  
 Seven Virtues*

Above me standing that compassionate Guide,  
 Who my first steps along the river drew.  
 "And where is Beatrice?"—perplexed I cried;  
 "Sitting beneath the foliage freshly sprung,  
 Upon its root behold her," she replied.  
 "Behold around her the companion throng;  
 The others with the Gryphon upward speeding,  
 Singing a sweeter and a deeper song."—  
 And if she spoke more words than the preceding  
 I know not, so mine eyes were fixt upon  
 Her who had shut me off from other heeding.  
 Alone upon the bare earth sat she down,  
 Left there as warder of the Chariot  
 I saw made fast by Creature two-in-one.  
 The seven nymphs a ring around her wrought,  
 And in their hands the seven lampads lay  
 That Aquilo and Auster extinguish not.  
 "Here art thou forester but a brief day,  
 And of that Rome where Christ is Roman, then  
 Shalt thou a burghess with me be for aye.  
 Whence, for the benefit of erring men,  
 Observe the Car, and what thou canst descry,  
 Having returned to earth, take heed to pen."—

So Beatrice commanded, and so I,  
 To very foot of her commands devote,  
 Whither she willed gave all my mind and eye.  
 Never with fall so swift the lightning smote  
 Out of a heavy cloud-bank, when it showers  
 Down from that bourn which stretches most re-  
 mote,

*Allegorical view  
 of the history of  
 the Church*

As now beheld I through the leafy bowers  
 Swoop down the bird of Jupiter amain,  
 Rending the bark and the fresh leaves and flowers,  
 Thereon with all his might smiting the Wain;  
 Whereat it reeled, like ship storm-buffeted,  
 Wave-tost to starboard and to port again.

*The Roman  
 Eagle*

I saw a she-fox glide with stealthy tread  
 Quite into the triumphal Car thereon,  
 And she appeared with wholesome food unfed.

*Heresy*

But for so foul a fault, with malison,  
 My Lady put her to such flight as bore  
 The fleshless framework of her skeleton.

Then, by the course that he had come before,  
 I saw the eagle swoop into the ark  
 Of the Chariot, and leave it feathered o'er.

*Donation of  
 Constantine,  
 Inf. xix, 115-  
 118*

And out of Heaven a voice of sighing, hark!  
 Such sighs as from a grieving bosom steal:  
 "How badly art thou fraught, my little bark!"—

Thereon the earth seemed cleft twixt wheel and wheel,  
 And thence I saw a dragon issuing,  
 That upward through the Chariot thrust his tail;

*The schism be-  
 tween Greek and  
 Roman Church,  
 or perhaps  
 Islamism*

And like the wasp withdrawing forth the sting,  
 He with malignant tail drew forth amain  
 Part of the floor, and went off wandering.

As fertile soil takes grass, the rest again  
 Took on the plumage, given to satisfy  
 Intent perchance benevolent and sane,  
 And both the wheels were overrun thereby  
 So quickly, and the chariot-pole o'errun,  
 The lips are longer parted with a sigh.

*Corrupting  
 gifts*

*Corrupt relations of Papacy and French Monarchy. The scourging of the whore doubtless refers to the outrage upon the person of Pope Boniface (Canto xx, 85-90). Dante perhaps here personifies in himself the enemies of Philip the Fair*

*Removal of Papal See to Avignon. The strange animal must be the Car bestialized by the heads, representing the mortal sins*

The holy structure, thus transformed, anon  
 Heads over all its different portions bore,  
 Three on the pole, at every corner one.  
 The three were horned like bullocks, but the four  
 With single horn had each the forehead crowned:  
 Monster like this was never seen before.  
 Secure as citadel on lofty mound,  
 Sitting upon the Car appeared to me  
 A wanton whore, darting her oglings round.  
 And, as her warder, lest she taken be,  
 Was standing at her side a giant brute,  
 And now and then their kissing did I see.  
 But since her roving eye and dissolute  
 Was turned on me, that savage paramour  
 Did scourge her from her head unto her foot.  
 Then jealously and fierce with anger, tore  
 The Monster loose, and dragged so far withal  
 That with the forest shielded he the whore  
 From me, and shielded the strange Animal.

XXXIII

THE POET MADE PURE FOR THE ASCENT TO THE STARS

"O God, the heathen are come into Thine own!"

So did the weeping maids, now three, now four

Alternately, sweet psalmody intone;

*Seventy-ninth  
Psalm*

And heavily sighed Beatrice, and wore

A listening look of such a plaintive grace

That Mary at the Cross changed little more.

But when the other virgins had given place

For her to speak, now upright on her feet,

She made reply to them with blazing face:

*Gospel of John  
xvi, 16. Alle-  
gorically, the  
restoration of  
the Church*

"A little while and me ye shall not meet;

And yet a little while," again she said,

"And ye shall look upon me, sisters sweet."—

Then sent she all the seven on, and made

To follow after, merely by a sign,

Me and the Lady and the Sage who stayed.

*The Lady  
Matilda; the  
sage Statius*

So went she, and had taken, I opine,

Scarcely ten paces, through the woodland faring,

When with her piercing eyes she smote on mine:

"Approach," commanded she, sedate of bearing,

"In order that, if I discourse with thee,

Thou mayst remain within an easy hearing."—

When I was with her, as I ought to be,

"Brother," said she, "why art thou diffident

To question, seeing that thou walkst with me?"—

As befalls people over-reverent

In speaking in the presence of the great,

Whose chattering teeth the living voice prevent,

So I, inapt for sound articulate,

Began: "You know, my Lady, what beseems

To me, because you know my poor estate."—

*Dante addresses  
her as if she  
were a royal  
personage:  
Canto xxx, 70,  
Par. xvi, be-  
ginning*

"I would not have thee henceforth by extremes

Of fear and shame," she answered, "made to quail,

Nor would I have thee speak like one in dreams.

*(Following the  
reading of  
Torraca)  
So the ardent  
prayer of Canto  
vi shall be  
answered; the  
Hound of Inf. i  
shall come.  
The DXV,  
whatever be the  
date foretold,  
may be an ana-  
gram for DUX,  
leader, or it may  
be the emblem of  
Christ*

Know that the vessel rent by dragon-tail,  
Was and is not: but be the guilty aware  
That Divine Vengeance fears no coat of mail.  
Not always shall remain without an heir  
The Eagle that emplumed the Chariot, whence  
It grew a monster and then a prey: I bear  
Sure witness, and foretell an influence  
Of stars already close at hand to give  
An era free from all impediments,  
Wherein One, a Five-hundred Ten and Five,  
God-sent, shall with the harlot do to death  
That giant who doth now with her connive.  
Perchance in cloudy talk I waste my breath,  
Like Sphynx and Themis, unpersuasive thus,  
Since in their mode the mind it darkeneth;  
But fact erelong will be the Œdipus  
Of this enigma, the hard knot untying,  
Nor be to fold or field injurious.

*Do not let the  
fear of the  
mighty hinder  
thee from telling  
men that the  
deed of Philip  
the Fair is such  
another crime as  
that of the dis-  
obedience of our  
first parents*

Mark thou: and even as I am prophesying,  
So do thou teach to those who run the race  
Of life, which is a hastening to dying;  
And bear in mind, when thou the writing trace,  
Not to conceal how thou hast seen undone  
The Plant, that twice was pillaged in this place.  
Whoever robs or rends it, malison  
Of very deed upon High God is casting,  
Who hallowed it to purpose of His own.

*First by the  
Devil, now by  
Philip the Fair  
(the giant)*

For tasting it, in pain and longing wasting  
Five thousand years and more, the first soul sighed  
For Him who punisht on Himself that tasting.

*Worldly joys  
stain, as did  
the blood of  
Pyramus the  
mulberry*

Thy wit must slumber, having not descried  
How for a special reason passing high  
Rises the Tree, and has the top so wide.  
And did thy vain conceits not petrify  
Like Elsa water round thy mind, were not  
Their joy a Pyramus to the mulberry,

So many circumstances would have taught

The justice of the interdict Divine

Upon the Tree, symbolically wrought.

*Par. xxvi,  
115-123*

But though I see that intellect of thine

Grown stony, and so windowless and blind

To radiance wherewith my teachings shine,

Yet, if unwritten, painted on the mind,

Pray bear them, by what token palmers do

Their staves with frondage of the palm entwined."—

*In remembrance  
of the pil-  
grimage*

And I: "As to the seal the wax is true,

Holding the form and pressure evermore,

So is my memory now stamp by you.

But why do your desired words outsoar

The utmost pinion of my sight, that so

I fail of them, the more I strive therefor?"—

"It is," she said, "to enable thee to know

The school that thou hast followed,—to display

How lamely it can follow where I go;

And that thou mayst perceive your human way

As far from the Divine, as is remote

From Earth the Heaven that highest speeds away."—

*The penetrating  
intellect of  
Dante must have  
more than dis-  
trusted the  
jejune scholas-  
tic philosophy*

Whereat I answered her: "I have forgot

That ever I estranged myself from you;

And qualms of conscience for it have I not."—

"And if it has been blotted from thy view,

Now recollect," her smiling answer went,

"How thou hast drunk of Lethë but anew;

So that, if smoke of fire is argument,

Thus to forget affords clear evidence

Of error in thy will elsewhere intent.

Be that as may, my oracles from hence

Shall be unveiled, far as to lay them bare

May be not unbecfitting thy rude sense."—

With slower paces and with greater glare  
     The sun in the meridian circle glowed,  
     That with the point of view shifts here and there,  
 When,—as is wont to halt upon his road  
     Whoever as a Leader goes before,  
     Finding strange thing or vestige,—so abode  
 The seven ladies by a shadowy shore:  
     Green foliage and glooming branches throw  
     Such shadow over mountain torrents froze.  
 In front, methought I saw Euphrates flow  
     And Tigris, from a single starting-place,  
     And separate, like friends at parting slow.  
 “O light, O glory of the human race!  
     What flood is this that gushes here away  
     Out of one fount, and separates apace?”—  
 To such a prayer reply was made me: “Pray  
     Matilda that she tell.”—As one who scatters  
     Suspicion of some fault imputed: “Nay,”  
 Said the fair Lady,—“this and other matters  
     Were told him by myself, and sure am I  
     That they were not concealed by Lethæ waters.”—  
 And Beatrice: “Perchance some care more high,  
     Which often renders inward vision dim,  
     May have bereft him of his memory.  
 But lo! where Eunoë doth overbrim;  
     Lead thither, and with wonted aid of thine,  
     Let fainting virtue be revived in him.”—  
 Like gentle spirit that would not decline,  
     But willingly makes other will her care,  
     Whenever that is manifest by sign,  
 So, laying hold on me, the Lady fair  
     Moved forward, and with grace all womanly  
     To Statius said: “Do thou come with him there.”—  
 Were ampler space, O Reader, left to me  
     For writing, I would sing in partial strain  
     Sweet draughts whereof I ne’er would sated be;

*Canto xxviii,  
 121 and follow-  
 ing lines*

*Evidently the  
 Poet meant the  
 three parts of the  
 Poem to be of  
 equal length. He  
 has now slightly  
 gone beyond the*

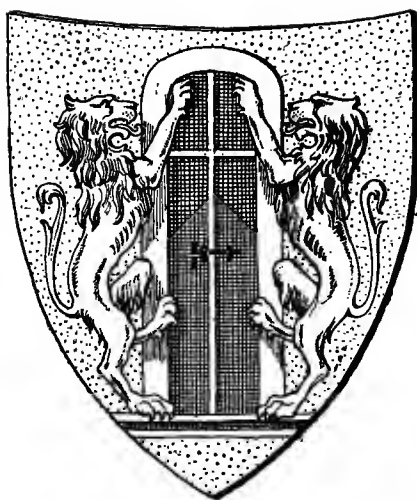


But since all sheets are full that I ordain  
This Second Canticle of mine unto,  
The discipline of art now draws the rein.  
From that most holy water I withdrew  
Reanimated, like new plants that are  
Renewed again with leafage ever new,  
Pure and prepared to mount from star to star.—

*limit set by the  
incomparably  
terse Inferno*







PORTINARI

# PARADISO

## I

### ASCENT OF DANTE WITH BEATRICE

Pervades the universe the glory of Him  
Who moveth all, and shineth more intense  
In one part, in another region dim.  
Within the Heaven that of his effluence  
Partaketh most, I found myself, discerning  
Things which no tongue can tell, descending thence;  
Because the mind, approaching its own yearning,  
Plunges engulfed in so profound a sea,  
That for the memory is no returning.  
Nathless, whatever in my memory  
I could entreasure of the Kingdom blest,  
Henceforth the matter of my song shall be.  
O good Apollo! for the final quest  
Inform me with thy power, till I be found  
Fit for the laurel which thou lovest best.  
So far one summit of Parnassus bound  
All my desire, but now the twain beneath,  
Needs must I enter the last wrestling-ground.  
Into my bosom enter thou, and breathe  
As when thou didst pluck Marsyas amain  
And from the scabbard of his limbs unsheathe.  
O Power Divine, if thou wilt lend me a strain  
Such as may body forth the Realm above  
Whose shadowy vestige lingers in my brain,  
Shalt see me to the laurel of thy love  
To crown me with those leaves, a pilgrim come,  
Wreath which thy theme shall make me worthy of.  
So seldom, Father, do we gather some  
For triumph or of bard or emperor,—  
Of human wills fault and opprobrium,—

*Prologue,  
lines 1 to 36*

*The matter of  
my song*

*Invocation to  
Apollo*

*Influence of  
the sun at the  
Vernal Equi-  
nox, when the  
circles of the  
Equator, the  
Zodiac, the  
Equinoctial  
Colure cross the  
circle of the  
Horizon*

*"Here" refers  
to Italy:  
"yonder" to  
the Summit of  
Purgatory*

*Earthly  
Paradise*

*Ascent through  
the Sphere of  
Fire*

That the Peneian frond should all the more  
 In the glad Delphic God enkindle joy,  
 When it sets any one athirst therefor.  
 From little spark beacons great flame on high:  
 Perchance for me with voices more elate  
 Shall prayer arise, that Cyrrha may reply.—  
 Rises to mortals up through many a gate  
 The lantern of the world; but from that line  
 Wherein four circles with three crosses meet,  
 With better course and in a better sign  
 It issues forth, and stamps with imprint clear  
 And tempers the world's wax to its design.  
 Almost this gate had made it evening here  
 And morning yonder; there was all aglow  
 And darkness covered this our hemisphere,  
 When, turned about toward the left-hand, lo!  
 Beatrice who was gazing on the sun:  
 Never did eagle fasten on it so.  
 And just as ever from the former one  
 Issues a second ray and upward flies,  
 Like pilgrim turning homeward, journey done,  
 So did her act, informing through the eyes  
 Mine own imagination, give me grace  
 To fix the sun beyond our wonted wise.  
 Much is permitted yonder, in this place  
 Debarred our powers, thanks to the spot, of yore  
 Fashioned and fitted for the human race.  
 This not so long nor little yet I bore,  
 But that I saw it sparkling round me nigh  
 As iron pours molten from the furnace door;  
 And of a sudden day to day thereby  
 Seemed to be added, as if He who can  
 Had with another sun adorned the sky.  
 Fixed where the everlasting circles ran  
 Were the rapt eyes of Beatrice, and mine  
 Withdrawn from Heaven were turned her own to  
 scan.

Gazing at her, I grew within divine  
Like Glaucus, tasting of the herb and thence  
Peer of the other gods beneath the brine.  
No word transhumanizing represents:  
The example then to him sufficient be  
Whom Grace reserves for like experience.  
If I was merely what Thou recently  
Createdst, Love, who governest the skies,  
Thou knowest, who with Thy light upliftedst me!  
Now when the wheel Thou dost eternalize  
By being desired, made me on it intent  
By music Thou dost tune and harmonize,  
So kindled then appeared the firmament  
By the sun's flame, that never rain nor stream  
Flowed over into a lake of such extent.  
The newness of the sound and the great gleam  
Kindled my wish their causes to assign  
To poignant longing, never so extreme.  
Whence she, who could my question well divine,  
The perturbation of my mind to lull,  
Parted her lips and took the words from mine,  
Beginning thus: "How dost thou make thee dull  
With false imagination, not perceiving  
What would be clear wert thou less fanciful.  
No longer art thou on earth, though so believing,  
But lightning from its region never flew  
Such flight as thou, thy proper home retrieving."—  
If disencumbered of my first doubt through  
Such little words as these, more smiled than phrased,  
I was the more benetted with a new,  
And said: "I almost ceased to be amazed;  
But now is wonder upon wonder piled  
How through these lightsome bodies I am raised."—  
Then she began, with sigh of pity mild,  
Bending her eyes upon me with such glance  
As mother casts on her delirious child:

*The Spheral  
Music*

*First words  
of Beatrice*

*The harmony  
of the universe*

"All things whatever observe ordinance  
 Among themselves; here doth that form prevail  
 Which keeps the world with God in consonance.  
 Here creatures high are hot upon the trail  
 Of the Eternal Worth, which is the goal  
 Whereto the rule fore-mentioned doth impel.  
 The ordinance in question doth control  
 All natures, which through fates of different sorts  
 Neighbor, both near and far, their Primal Soul;  
 Wherefore they shape their course to different ports  
 Of the vast sea of being,—each with boon  
 Of instinct that informs it and supports.  
 This bears away the fire toward the moon,  
 This force doth mortal hearts forever move,  
 This bind the earth together and attune.  
 Not merely things created empty of  
 Intelligence, this mighty crossbow hurls,  
 But those endowed with intellect and love.  
 The Providence that shapes all ends, enfurls  
 That Heaven in dateless quiet with its light,  
 Wherein that sphere which is most speedy, whirls.  
 And thither now, as to appointed site,  
 Bears us along the vigor of that cord  
 Which aims at happy mark its arrow-flight.  
 As character does not indeed accord  
 At all times with the artisan's intent,  
 The stuff being deaf to the creative word,  
 So may the creature from the course he went,  
 Though thus impelled, as free will may inspire,  
 Incline sometimes to follow other bent  
 (In the same manner as we see the fire  
 Fall from the cloud), if down to earth amiss  
 Be wrenched the primal thrust through false desire.  
 Thou shouldst not wonder, judge I well of this,  
 At thy ascending, more than at a rill  
 Plunging to foot of lofty precipice.

*"Descent and  
fall to us is  
adverse"*



A marvel it would be if with thy will  
    Unclogged, thou wert to settle to the base,  
    As if on earth a living fire were still."—  
Thereon tow'rd heaven she turned again her face.

## II

## HEAVEN OF THE MOON

O ye who in your little bark till now,  
 Eager for listening, have made your way  
 Behind my vessel with the singing prow,  
 Turn to your native shore while yet ye may:  
 Do not put out to sea, lest haply there  
 By losing me, ye should remain astray.  
 None ever coursed the water where I fare:  
 Minerva breathes, Apollo pilots me,  
 And all nine Muses point me to the Bear.  
 Ye other few, with neck stretcht yearningly  
 For bread of angels whereon ye are fain  
 To live while here, nor ever sated be,—  
 Your ship may well put out upon the main,  
 Following close upon my wake before  
 The salt-sea water returns smooth again.  
 Those glorious ones at Colchis who of yore  
 Saw Jason made a plowman, no such burning  
 Amazement felt, that ye shall not feel more.  
 The concreate and everlasting yearning  
 For the Realm Deiform bore us well-nigh  
 As swiftly as moves heaven to your discerning.  
 I gazed on Beatrice, and she on high:  
 And in such time perchance as crossbow shot  
 Alights and is unloosened and let fly,  
 I found myself arrived where sight was caught  
 Compulsively by something marvelous:  
 Whence, since my doing could be hidden not  
 From her, she faced me, blithe as beauteous:  
 "Lift up thy grateful mind to God!" she said,  
 "Who with the prime star has united us."—  
 Around us there appeared to me to spread  
 A cloud smooth, dense, consolidate, and bright  
 Like diamond whereon the sun is shed.

*The warning*

*The promise*

*Order of verbs  
 reversed to  
 suggest  
 instantaneous  
 action*

*Heaven of the  
 Moon*

Into the pearl of everlasting white  
 We glided, even as water though unstirred  
 Is penetrated by a ray of light.  
 If I was body (and here it seems absurd  
 That one bulk brookt another, as must be  
 If body into body glide!) more spurred  
 Should be the longing of our hearts to see  
 That Essence where we shall behold the plan  
 Of our own nature blent with Deity.  
 There shall be seen what now by faith we scan,  
 Not proved, but primal truth self-evident  
 And by direct cognition held by man.  
 I answered: "Lady, with devout intent  
 I render thanks to Him who did ordain  
 That from the mortal world I should be sent.  
 But tell me, what those dusky marks which stain  
 This body, whereby on earth below the while  
 People are prone to fable about Cain?"—  
 "And if," she answered with a little smile,  
 "Where key of sense effects no opening  
 Mortal opinion may so far beguile,  
 Surely the shafts of wonder should not sting  
 Thee longer, since even following the sense  
 Thou seest that reason has too short a wing.  
 But tell me, what is thine own inference?"—  
 And I: "Methinks what here seems different  
 Is brought about by bodies rare and dense."—  
 "Well shalt thou see what credence thou hast lent  
 To error," she answered, "giving heed unto  
 What I adduce in counter-argument.  
 The Eighth sphere shows forth many a light to you  
 Which in their quantity and in their kind  
 May be observed from different points of view.  
 If only rare and dense herein combined,  
 One single virtue in all were absolute,  
 Now more, now less, now equally assigned.

*Mystery of the  
 union of the  
 human with the  
 Divine*

*Spots in the  
 Moon*

*The smile of  
 Beatrice*

*Dante's former  
 opinion*

*The correct view  
 (scholastic rea-  
 soning)*

*For the argu-  
 ment here see  
 note at end of  
 this canto*

But Virtue different must needs be fruit  
 Of fundamental forms, and these, save one,  
 Thy reasoning would pluck up by the root.  
 Besides, if rarity produced that dun  
 Thou mootest, or this planet through and through  
 Is perforated, leaving matter none,  
 Or otherwise, as fleshly bodies do  
 The fat and lean apportion, so would this  
 Alternate leaves within its book renew.  
 Supposing true the first hypothesis,  
 The sunlight in eclipse would be descried  
 Right through, as through whatever orifice.  
 This false, consider we the other side,  
 And if I chance to find an error there  
 Then thy opinion will be falsified.  
 Now if this rareness find no thoroughfare,  
 There needs must be some limit hindering  
 The counter-penetration of the rare;  
 Thence will the ray of other body spring  
 Reverberated backward, in such kind  
 As back from leaded glass comes coloring.  
 But thou wilt say that here appears more blind  
 The radiance than in regions othersome,  
 From being reflected further from behind.  
 Such an objection may be overcome  
 Experimentally, if thou wouldst try  
 That fountain of all human masterdom.  
 Take mirrors three, and two of them set by  
 At equal distance, and between the twain  
 The other further off, before thine eye.  
 Turning toward them, let a light remain  
 Behind thy back, kindling the mirrors three  
 And smitten by them all to thee again.  
 Whereas the further light will seem to thee  
 Less ample as to size, yet will it show  
 An equal luster, of necessity.

*The Experi-  
 ment (the  
 modern method)*

Now, even as the ground beneath the snow  
 Is stript of previous color and of cold  
 Beneath the beating of the warm rays, so  
 Thy mind, being stript of error fold on fold,  
 Will I inform with light so crystalline  
 That it shall quiver now thou canst behold.  
*Influences of the spheres*

Within the Heaven that harbors Peace Divine  
 Circles a body in whose virtue lies  
 The being of whatever it enshrine.  
*Primum mobile*

The following heaven, which has so many eyes,  
 Imparts that being through various types, and these  
 Distinct from it, which yet it doth comprise.  
*Fixed stars*

The other spheres in different degrees  
 Dispose of their distinctive elements  
 According to their seeds and purposes.

Thou seest these universal instruments  
 Thus drawing from above, while raining down  
 From grade to lower grade their influence.

Look at me finding pathway for thine own  
 Arrival at the truth thou art fain to scan,  
 And know henceforth to keep the ford alone!

The breath of blessed Movers needs must fan  
 Motion and influence of holy sphere,  
 As craft of hammer moves by artisan.  
*Celestial intelligences*

And that same Heaven the many lights make fair,  
 From the Deep Mind that gives it whirl and thrust  
 So takes the image and so seals it there.

And as the soul within your human dust  
 Makes different members work in unison,  
 Distributed through each in measure just,

So doth the Mind deploy its benison  
 Multiplied through the starry firmament,  
 But turns upon Itself, remaining One.

Each different power makes mixture different  
 With precious body rendered quick thereby,  
 Wherewith, like life within you, it is blent.

By glad endowment of the Nature High,  
    This mingled virtue through the body glows,  
    As gladness lights the pupil of the eye.  
From this proceeds whatever difference shows  
    "Twixt light and light, and not from rare and dense:  
    This is the intrinsic principle whence flows  
The dark and bright, as by its excellence."—

*Note*

The astrological theory of the time was that the starry heavens, although of one substance, vary in quantity and kind, and to these differences correspond the diverse influences they are supposed to exercise on the earth and on human affairs. The same principle, it is argued, must apply to the spots in the moon. These appearances proceed from causes much deeper than mere rarity and density.

## III

## SPIRITS OF WOMEN IN THE LUNAR HEAVEN

The sun that erst with love had warmed my breast  
 Had now the fair sweet face of truth, by proof  
 And refutation, rendered manifest;  
 And to confess, so far as was behoof,  
 Myself corrected thus and confident,  
 My head for speech was lifted more aloof.  
 But something gleamed on me, whence so intent  
 To gaze thereon my baffled vision grew,  
 That my confession out of memory went.  
 As through transparent polisht glass, or through  
 Still and pellucid waters, of too mean  
 A depth to have the bottom lost to view,  
 Come back the contours of our faces, seen  
 So pallidly that pearl on forehead white  
 Is caught as quickly if the eye is keen,—  
 Such faces, fain for speaking, came to sight;  
 Whence I in counter-error fell thereby  
 To what befell the fount-enamored wight.  
 The instant that aware of them was I,—  
 Reflected images by my surmise,—  
 To see of whom they were, I turned mine eye;  
 But, seeing nothing, went with my surprise  
 Straight to the light of her, my Leader sweet,  
 Whence smiling kindled in her holy eyes.  
 She said: "No wonder if with smiles I meet  
 This exhibition of thy childish mind  
 Unwilling yet to truth to trust its feet,  
 But turns thee back in vain, after its kind.  
 True substances are what thou dost perceive,  
 Here for some forfeiture of vows assigned.  
 Whence talk with them, and listen, and believe;  
 For that which gives them peace, the one true Fire,  
 Suffers their feet its purlieu not to leave."

*Heaven of the  
Moon*

*Marvelous  
vision: Dante  
mistakes spirits  
for reflected  
images*

*The smile of  
Beatrice*

And to that shade who seemed most to require  
 Question with me, began I, tow'rd it bended  
 Like one bewildered by too great desire:  
 "O spirit born to bliss, with radiance blended  
 Of life eterne in sweet felicity  
 That, tasted not, is never comprehended,  
 Thou wilt be gracious to content in me  
 The craving for thy name, and for your lot."—  
 Whereon with smiling eyes and promptly, she:  
 "To just desire our charity doth not  
 Deny the door, more than His love doth so  
 Who wills His Court all in His image wrought.

*Dante addresses  
the spirit*

I was a virgin sister there below;  
 And if thou recollect, it will appear  
 That greater beauty doth not hide me: know

*Piccarda Donati  
(see Purgatorio  
xxiv, near the  
beginning; also  
the prediction of  
the fate of Corso  
Donati in same  
canto)*

I am Piccarda, relegated here  
 Together with these others who are blest,  
 And myself blessed in the slowest sphere.

All our affections, kindled as may best  
 Conform to pleasure of the Holy Spirit,  
 Rejoice being fashioned after His behest.

And this low-seeming lot that we inherit,  
 Is given to us because we did our vow  
 Make in some manner void, or did defer it."—

"Your wondrous faces shine, I know not how,"  
 Was my reply, "with some diviner grace,  
 Transmuting them from what we knew ere now;

*Remiss in exe-  
cution of vows*

Whence was my memory of laggard pace;  
 But what thou tellest helps me to make clear  
 Thy features which now better I retrace.

*Degrees of  
beatitude*

But tell me, ye whose blessedness is here,  
 Do ye desire a loftier place above  
 To grow in vision or become more dear?"—

Her fitting smile lit up the faces of  
 Those others; then she spoke so blithesomely  
 She seemed to kindle with first fire of love:



"Brother, the influence of charity  
 Contents our will, alone solicitous  
 For what we have,—no craving else have we.  
 Did we desire a place more glorious,  
 Then our desires would be at variance  
 With will of Him who here assigneth us;  
 These circles have no room for dissonance,  
 As thou shalt see, for herein love is fate,  
 If thou behold its nature not askance.  
 Nay, 'tis the essence of this blessed state  
 To dwell within the Will Divine alone,  
 Whereby our wills with His participate.  
 So that throughout this realm, from zone to zone,  
 We pleasure the whole realm without surcease,  
 And please the King who inwills us with His Own;  
 His will is consummation of our peace;  
 And everything is moving to that sea,—  
 All it creates as nature gives increase."—  
 Then only was the truth made clear to me  
 That everywhere in Heaven is Paradise  
 Where Grace Supreme rains not in one degree.  
 But, as will happen, should one food entice,  
 Other than that wherewith we have been fed,  
 Returning thanks for that, we crave for this,  
 Such was my case in what I did and said  
 Seeking to learn what web it was whereof  
 She had not drawn the shuttle to the head.  
 "Life perfect and high worth enheaven above,"  
 She said thereto, "a Lady among the blest,  
 Under whose rule in your world women love  
 To robe and veil, till death to watch and rest  
 Beside that Spouse, accepter and rewarder  
 Of vows which love conforms to His request.  
 To follow her, of maiden weeds discarder,  
 Fleeing the world and in her habit dressing,  
 I pledged me to the pathway of her Order.

*"La sua volon-  
 tate è nostra  
 pace"*

*Santa Clara  
 of Assisi*

*Violence done to  
Piccarda by  
Corso Donati*

Thereafter men more used to ban than blessing  
Ravisht me from the cloister sweet: God knoweth  
What my life then, without mine own confessing.  
This other splendor on my right who showeth  
Her beauty to thee, luminously burning  
With all the light that in our circle gloweth,

*The great Con-  
stance, mother of  
the great  
Frederick*

Takes to herself these words myself concerning:  
A sister she, and so from her was riven  
The veil by hands its holy shadow spurning.  
But when she back into the world was driven  
Despite her wish and wont legitimate,  
She never from her heart the veil had given.

*The three blasts  
of Swabia are  
Frederick Bar-  
barossa, Henry  
VI, and Freder-  
ick II (one of  
the most inter-  
esting men of  
his century).  
For the fate of  
her grandson,  
Manfred, see  
Purg. iii*

This is the radiance of Constance great,  
Who to, the Second Blast of Swabia  
Bore the Third Puissance, and ultimate."—  
So spake she, and in chant began to say  
*Ave Maria*, and chanting from me stole  
As through deep water sinks a weight away.  
My vision, straining to pursue that soul  
To the utmost, when she vanisht into bliss,  
Turned to the mark of a more longed-for goal,  
Reverting wholly round to Beatrice;  
But such a lightning flasht she on my look  
That first my sight endured it not; and this  
So gave me pause that question I forsook.

IV

SOLUTION OF PERPLEXING QUESTIONS

Between two foods alike to appetite  
 And like afar, a free man, I suppose,  
 Would starve before of either he would bite;  
 So would a lamb, between the hungry throes  
 Of two fierce wolves, feel equipoise of dread,  
 So hesitate a hound between two does.  
 Whence by my doubts alike solicited  
 By sheer necessity, blame can be none  
 Nor commendation, if I nothing said.  
 And I said nothing; but desire upon  
 My face was pictured, questioning as well,  
 Set forth more fervently than words had done.  
 Beatrice did as once did Daniël  
 Taking Nebuchadnezzar's wrath away,  
 Which first had rendered him unjustly fell,  
 And said: "I see how two desires have play,  
 Each so compelling that the eagerness  
 Stifes the very breath of what 'twould say.  
 Thou urgest: 'By what justice can duress  
 Imposed by others, if persist good will,  
 Render the measure of my merit less?'  
 Perplexes thee another question still:  
 'Do souls rejoin the stars, as it would seem,  
 And the idea of Plato thus fulfill?'  
 These questions balance equally the beam  
 Of thy desire; and therefore will I first  
 Treat that which is in venom most extreme.  
 Not he of Seraphs most in God immerst,  
 Not Moses, Samuel, nor either John  
 Thou choosest, nor yet Mary, I say, can thirst  
 In any other heaven to have their throne  
 Than do these spirits whom thou didst discern,  
 Nor more nor fewer years of being own.

*A canto of  
scholastic rea-  
soning*

*Dilemma of  
Buridan's ass*

*Beatrice reads  
in Dante's face  
the two ques-  
tions*

*All in the  
same Heaven*

*The appearances in the various spheres emblematic*

All make the Primal Circle fair, and earn  
Life of sweet bliss in different measure here,  
Through feeling more or less the breath eterne.

Not as allotted here did they appear  
Within this heaven, but as a sign intending  
The least exalted though celestial sphere.

My words perforce unto your wit are bending,  
Which grasps but by perception of the sense  
What then it worthy makes for comprehending.

The Holy Scriptures, condescending hence  
To your conceit, with foot and hand endue  
The Deity, with mystic difference;

And Holy Church so represents to you  
Michael and Gabriel with human traits,  
And the other who gave Tobit health anew.

*Plato's error*

That which Timæus of the soul debates  
Is different from that seen here so far,—  
For seemingly he thinks it as he states.

He says the soul returns to its own star,  
Whence nature actuated its descent,  
Giving it in the flesh an avatar.

And in his doctrine haply more is meant  
Than meets the ear, and may have sense whereto  
Befits it not to be irreverent.

If, for the influence they rain on you,  
He means one must approve and disapprove  
These wheels, perchance his bow hits something true.

This principle, ill comprehended, drove  
Almost the whole world formerly astray  
In naming Mars and Mercury and Jove.

The other dubitance that gives thee stay  
Empoisons less, for its malignity  
Could never lead thee from myself away.

That Justice here should seem unjust to be  
In mortal vision, is an argument  
Of faith, not heretic iniquity.

But that ye, humanly intelligent,  
 May penetrate into this truth the more,  
 As thou desirest, make I thee content.  
 If it were violence that he who bore  
 In no wise aided him who used the might,  
 These souls could claim no pardon on that score;  
 For will is never quencht in will's despite,  
 But doth as nature ever doth in fire,  
 Though hundred tempests buffet left and right.  
 For, little or much as it may yield, desire  
 Abets the violence: and these did thus,  
 Free to their sanctuary to retire.  
 Had but their will been whole and vigorous,  
 Like that which fastened Lawrence to his grill  
 And ruthless to his hand made Mucius,  
 Then up the road whence they were dragged, their will  
 Would have impelled them, soon as they were free;  
 But all too rare is will so inflexible.  
 And by these words, if thou hast duteously  
 Gathered them up, is quasht the argument  
 That would yet many a time have troubled thee.  
 But now another cross-entanglement  
 Puzzles thine eyes, wherethrough thou couldst not  
 find  
 An issue for thyself, until forspent.  
 I have for certain put into thy mind  
 That never could speak false a soul in bliss,  
 Since to the source of truth forever joined;  
 Then mayst have understood Piccarda amiss  
 That Constance to the veil was ever true:  
 So that she seems to contradict me in this.  
 Many a time, my brother, urged thereto  
 By hope of scaping peril, under stress,  
 Men have done what they ought not, would not do;  
 Even as Alcmæon,—who by prayer express  
 Of his own sire, his mother life refused,—  
 Not to lose piety, grew pitiless.

*Violence done  
to human will*

*Due to laxity  
which abets*

*Not all the  
blessed are  
martyrs*

*Analysis of the  
assertion of  
Piccarda about  
Constance*

Think, pray, when come to this, that force is fused  
 With will together, and so the two are blent  
 That the offenses cannot be excused.

Will absolute doth not to ill consent:  
 Consenting just so far as it may rue,  
 If it resist, some greater detriment.

*Two kinds  
 of will*

Therefore Piccarda, saying what is true,  
 Means absolute volition; I, however,  
 The other,—whence in truth agree we two.”—

Such was the rippling of the holy river  
 Out of the fountain whence all truth flows over,  
 Setting at rest both my desires forever.

*Now the poet  
 speaks*

“Divine one, O belov’d of the First Lover,”  
 I straightway said, “whose words are in me burning  
 And flooding till I life on life recover,

Not deep enough the channel of my yearning  
 For thanks of mine coequal with your favor;  
 Let Him reply who can and is discerning!

*Note the  
 “your.” But  
 to a being really  
 divine “thou  
 (thy).” Com-  
 pare St.  
 Bernard’s  
 prayer to the  
 Virgin Mary  
 (final canto)*

I see our mind unsated still with savor  
 Of any truth, till of that truth aware  
 Beyond which is no light that doth not waver.

Therein it rests, like animal in lair  
 When it attaineth; and it can attain,  
 Else frustrate every craving for it were.  
 Whence like a shoot doubt ever springs again  
 At foot of truth; and so from height to height  
 Doth nature urge us summitward amain.

This doth assurance give me, this invite  
 To ask with reverence of another theme,  
 O Lady, wherein truth is dark to sight.

*Can good deeds  
 make amends  
 for broken vows?*

Fain would I know if man may ever dream  
 With good to so amend vows forfeited,  
 They shall not in your balance kick the beam.”—

Beatrice gazed at me with eyes that sped  
 Flashes of love, divine of radiance,  
 So that my vanquisht force of vision fled,  
 And I became as lost, with bended glance.

## V.

VOWS AND FREE WILL; ASCENT TO THE HEAVEN OF  
MERCURY

"If my love beam upon thee blazing hot  
 Beyond the measure that is absolute  
 On earth regarded, do thou marvel not,  
 Seeing that such intensity has root  
 In perfect vision, which doth ever move  
 Tow'rd the good apprehended, sure of foot.

I see how shines already from above  
 Into thine intellect the Eternal Light  
 That needs but to be seen to kindle love;  
 And if some other thing your love delight,  
 Naught is it but some vestige of that same  
 Effulgence, comprehended not aright.

Thou askest whether men for vows they maim  
 May pay such other service as to gain  
 Exemption of the soul from any claim?"—

*Commutation of  
the vow*

So Beatrice began this further strain;  
 And even as one discoursing, who would not  
 Break off, took up the holy theme again:

"The gift most precious to Creative Thought,  
 Most signal of God's bounties, and the one  
 After the pattern of his goodness wrought,

Was Freedom of the Will,—a benison  
 Wherewith all creatures of intelligence  
 Both were and are endowed, and they alone.

*Free will*

Now will appear to thee by inference  
 The high worth of the vow so framed, supposing  
 That with thine own consenting, God consents;

For, between God and man the bargain closing,  
 Of what I call this treasure an oblation  
 Is made in sooth, made by its own proposing.

*The vow sacri-  
fices the will*

What may be offered then in compensation?  
 Weening to use well what thou offerest,  
 Thou seekest for thy plunder consecration.

Now art thou assured concerning the main quest:  
 But since herein doth Holy Church acquit,  
 Which seems against the truth I manifest,  
 Thou canst not choose but still at table sit  
 Awhile, for the tough viand thou hast chewed  
 Wants further aid for thy digesting it.  
 Take what I tell thee in receptive mood  
 And hold it fast; it is the very vice  
 Of wit to lose what has been understood.

*Two elements  
 of the vow*

Pertain to essence of this sacrifice  
 Two elements: one what it treats about,  
 The other from the covenant takes rise.  
 The latter never can be canceled out  
 Save by fulfillment; and already so  
 I spoke about it as to banish doubt;  
 Hence had the Hebrews still to offer, though  
 Some thing whereof the sacrifice was made  
 Might be commuted, as thou shouldest know.  
 The former, which as matter I portrayed,  
 May well be such that no offense is done  
 If with some other matter counterweighed.

*Cf. Purg. ix,  
 117*

But willfully let on his shoulder none  
 Shift burden, without sanction of the Power  
 That turns the white key and the yellow one.  
 And folly all commuting deem, before  
 The thing remitted in the thing ye essay  
 Shall be contained, as in the six the four.  
 Therefore whatever by its worth may weigh  
 So much as can make every balance swing,  
 Can never be redeemed with other pay.

*Cases of  
 Jephthah and  
 Agamemnon*

Let men deem not the vow a trifling thing:  
 Be loyal, and in being so not blind  
 As Jephthah was in his first offering,  
 Who did worse honoring the vow unkind,  
 But should have said: 'I sinned'; like foolish plight  
 The mighty leader of the Greeks entwined,



Whence rued Iphigenia her beauty bright,  
 And made for her both wise and simple rue,  
 So many as hear report of such a rite!  
 Christians, be graver in your moving; do  
 Not featherlike to every wind consent,  
 And ween not every water washes you.  
 Ye have the Old and the New Testament,  
 The Shepherd of the Church to shape your aim:  
 Therewith for your salvation be content.  
 If sorry greed aught else to you proclaim,  
 Be men, and be not silly sheep, that so  
 The Jew among you laugh you not to shame.  
 Behave not like the lamb who doth forgo  
 The mother's milk, and wantonly delight  
 In making of himself a mimic foe."—  
 Thus Beatrice to me, just as I write;  
 Then all in longing up to that expanse  
 Where most the world is quickened, turned hersight.  
 Her silence and transfigured countenance  
 Imposed like silence on my eager wit,  
 Though ready with new questions to advance.  
 And as the mark is by the arrow smit  
 Before the cord forgets to quiver, thus  
 Into the Second Kingdom did we flit.  
 I saw my Lady there so rapturous  
 As to the luster of that heaven she drew  
 That even the planet grew more luminous.  
 And if the laughing star was altered too,  
 What then became I, by my native mood  
 Ever susceptible to something new!  
 As in clear pool where the still fishes brood,  
 Aught dropping in impels the finny drove  
 To dart toward it, deeming it their food,  
 So saw I there a thousand splendors move  
 To meet our coming, and every one was hymning:  
 "Behold one who will multiply our love."—

*Application of  
the lesson*

*Slipping into  
the Heaven of  
Mercury*

*The approach  
of new spirits*

And every shade of them, now nearer swimming,  
 Appeared as with effulgent glory fraught  
 Streaming out of its rapture overbrimming.  
 If what is here begun proceeded not,  
 Think, Reader, what an agonizing dearth  
 Of knowing more would be within thee wrought;  
 And from thyself infer how these gave birth  
 To yearning in me to hear each circumstance  
 Concerning them, when they revealed their worth.  
 "O happy-born, whom sovran Grace thus grants  
 To see the thrones triumphant and eterne  
 Ere thou abandonest thy militance,  
 By light that ranges through all heaven we burn  
 Enkindled so; and therefore, if thou please,  
 Content thy heart with light from out our urn."—  
 One of the souls devout spokē words like these  
 To me; and Beatrice: "Speak, speak out free  
 And trust to them as to divinities."—  
 "Well I perceive how thou art nesting thee  
 In thine own light, and drawing it again  
 Through eyes that coruscate so laughingly.  
 But who thou art, blest soul, I cannot ken,  
 Nor wherefore thou art graded in the sphere  
 That is in alien radiance veiled to men."—  
 Thus spoke I straight toward the luster fair  
 That first address me; whereupon it grew  
 By far more radiant than it was whilere.  
 Then like the sun concealing himself through  
 Excess of light, when heat has gnawed away  
 The tempering shade to heavy vapors due,  
 Concealed himself from me in his own ray  
 The holy shape for very jubilance;  
 And thus fast folded did in answer say  
 In fashion as the following canto chants.

*Dante is  
 accosted by a  
 spirit*

*The poet does  
 speak*

## VI

A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY: THE FUNCTION OF ROME  
IN HUMAN REDEMPTION

"When Constantine had wheeled the Eagle away  
 Against Heaven's course, where it was following  
 That ancient who espoused Lavinia,  
 Two centuries and more saw hovering  
 The Bird of God at Europe's border line,  
 Near to the mountains whence it first took wing;  
 And, overshadowing with wings divine,  
 Governed from hand to hand the world of man,  
 And in due turn alighted upon mine.  
 Cæsar was I, and am Justinian,  
 Who, to the primal Love obedient,  
 Winnowed the laws, and bolted to the bram  
 And ere yet wholly on that labor bent  
 Did I a single nature in Christ misdeem,  
 Not more, and with such faith remained content;  
 But blessed Agapetus, the supreme  
 Shepherd of souls, directed me and drew  
 To the pure faith, discoursing of the theme.  
 Him I believed, and what by faith he knew  
 Now clearly see, as seest thou every pair  
 Of contradictories both false and true.  
 When with the Church my footsteps moving were,  
 I gave me single-minded to the laws,  
 Inspired by Grace Divine to that high care;  
 Committing weapons in the imperial cause  
 To Belisarius mine, so comforted  
 By Heaven's right hand that I had leave to pause.  
 Here then to thy first question comes to head  
 My answer; but its terms make apposite  
 That something as a sequel should be said,  
 That thou mayest see with what amount of right  
 Against the hallowed ensign move both they  
 Who make it theirs and who against it fight.

*The soul of  
 Justinian the  
 lawgiver speaks*

*Conversion and  
 work of  
 Justinian*

*Victorious flight  
 of the Roman  
 eagle from the  
 time of Æneas  
 on*

Think what large reverence we ought to pay  
Its prowess, starting from the moment when  
Died Pallas to secure it sovereign sway.  
In Alba 'twas, thou knowest, a denizen  
Three hundred years and more, until the close  
When fought the three to three for it again.  
From Sabine rape down to Lucretia's woes  
Thou knowest how with seven kings it went  
Subduing round about the neighbor foes.  
Thou knowest how, borne by Romans eminent,  
'Gainst Brennus, against Pyrrhus it o'ercame,  
And against others, prince or government;  
Torquatus, and that Quinctius who took name  
From hair unkempt, Decii and Fabii so  
Wrought deeds that gladly I embalm their fame.  
It laid the pride of the Arabians low,  
Who passed in train of Hannibal among  
The rocky Alpine peaks whence pours the Po.  
It led to triumph while they yet were young  
Pompey and Scipio, and bitterly  
Wrought to that hill beneath which thou art sprung.  
Then near the time when heavenly harmony  
Would tune the world to concord with its own,  
Cæsar laid hold of it at Rome's decree;  
And what it wrought from Var to Rhine is known  
To Isère, to the Saone, and to the Seine,  
And every valley brimming up the Rhone.  
Its prowess, issuing from Ravenna, when  
It leapt the Rubicon, so swiftly flew  
That follow it could neither tongue nor pen.  
It wheeled the legions back to Spain; then threw  
Them on Durazzo; and smote Pharsalia  
So that to torrid Nile was felt the rue.  
Antandros and the Simois it saw,  
Its starting point, where Hector sleeps so fast;  
Then, woe to Ptolemy, roused beak and claw;

Thence fell, like thunderbolt on Juba cast;  
 Then wheeling back into your West it came  
 On hearing the Pompeian trumpet-blast.  
 What the next bearer with it did, proclaim  
 Brutus and Cassius in the hellish deep,  
 And Modena and Perugia wail the same.  
 Ever doth wretched Cleopatra weep  
 Because of it,—she, fleeing on before,  
 Took from the adder suddenly black sleep.  
 With him it coursed far as the Red-sea shore;  
 With him composed the world in peace so great  
 That barred on Janus was his temple door.  
 But what the standard that I celebrate  
 Had done before and was about to do  
 For mortal man in every subject state,  
 Dwindles away, beclouded to the view,  
 If one in hand of the third Cæsar seek  
 With vision clear and with affection true;  
 For Living Justice, moving me to speak,  
 Gave it, in person of that emperor,  
 The glory vengeance for just wrath to wreak.  
 Now marvel here at what I tell thee more:  
 Later it flew with Titus, doing again  
 Vengeance on vengeance for the sin of yore.  
 And after, when the Lombard fang would fain  
 Bite Holy Church, beneath those eagle wings  
 Came to her aid victorious Charlemagne.  
 Now mayst thou judge of their endeavors  
 Accused above; the people I accuse  
 Have been the cause of all your sufferings.  
 Against the public standard one would use  
 The yellow lilies; one to party lines  
 Confine it,—hard the criminal to choose.  
 Under another ensign Ghibellines  
 May ply and ply devices,—for amiss  
 Follow it who from justice discombines.

*The Eagle executes Divine  
 Justice for  
 man's sin, and  
 does vengeance  
 on the Jews*

*Application of  
 the lesson to  
 Dante's time*

And let that younger Charles not trample this,  
 He and his Guelfs, but fear the claws that wield  
 Force to flay tougher lion-fell than his.  
 Children have oft bewailed by flood and field  
 The father's fault, nor let him ever ween  
 His lilies to be quartered in God's shield.

*"That last in-  
 firmity of noble  
 mind"*

This little planet is made passing sheen  
 With the good spirits who have striven that fame  
 And honor follow them; whenever lean  
 The truant wishes toward such an aim,  
 Then true affection needs must radiate  
 Upward to Heaven less vividly aflame.  
 But that our guerdon is commensurate  
 With worth, is part of our beatitude,  
 Seeing it nor too little nor too great.  
 Whence Living Justice sweetens so the mood  
 Of love in us that no perversity  
 Can tangle it in any turpitude.

Voices diverse below make melody;  
 So in this life of ours each various grade  
 Renders among these wheels sweet harmony.

*Noble unselfish-  
 ness of Romeo,  
 minister of  
 Count Berenger  
 of Provence*

And from within the present pearl is rayed  
 The light of Romeo, whose labors great  
 And generous were shabbily repaid.  
 But those of Provence cannot gratulate  
 Who wrought against that noble minister:  
 Evil to them who other's good abate!  
 Four daughters, Queens, had Raymond Berenger,  
 And he who crowned them was no citizen  
 But Romeo, a lowly pilgrimer.  
 By crooked counsel moved, the Master then  
 Calls to account the servant just, who clears  
 His credit,—seven and five for every ten.  
 Then he departed poor and stricken in years;  
 But if the world could know the heart he bore  
 Begging his bread and eating it with tears,  
 Much as it praises, it would praise him more."

## VII

## MYSTERY OF THE REDEMPTION

"Hosannah, holy God of Hosts, Thou who  
 Dost all the blessed fires that are burning  
 Within the Kingdom with Thy light outdo!"—  
 Even so, in time to its own music turning,  
 That being on whom two splendors form a crest,  
 Chanted, as well I saw, the while discerning  
 How he began to dance with all the rest,  
 And like swift sparklets with velocity  
 And sudden distance veiled them from my quest.  
 Within me I was saying doubtfully:  
 "Tell it to her, tell it my Lady, whose  
 Distillments are so sweetly slaking me;"  
 But reverence, whereby I cannot choose  
 But mastered be at sound of "Be" or "Iss,"  
 Bowed me again like one whom slumber sues.  
 But little while so left me Beatrice  
 Till, with a radiant smile of such a kind  
 As would have put a burning man in bliss,  
 She said: "By my unfailing sight I find  
 The question how a vengeance that was just  
 Could justly be avenged, perturbs thy mind;  
 But if I speed to thy release, so must  
 Thou listen well, because these words of mine  
 Will guerdon thee with reasoning august.  
 By not submitting to a curb benign  
 Upon his power of will, that man ne'er born  
 Damning himself, condemned thus all his line,  
 Whereby the human race below forlorn  
 Lay many a century in error great,  
 Until the Word Almighty did not scorn  
 Going down to join in Person increate,  
 By the sole act of His eternal love,  
 That nature from its Maker alienate.

*He reverences  
the very syllables  
of her  
name*

*The smile of  
Beatrice*

*His question  
stated*

*Fall of Man*

*"For God so  
loved the world"*

Now turn thy look to what I reason of:

This nature, which its Maker made His own,

Did as created pure and sinless prove,

But it was exiled by its fault alone

From Paradise, for that it wandering

From way of truth and life astray had gone.

*The just  
penalty*

Thus, by the adopted nature measuring,

The penalty upon the cross exacted

Did never any yet so justly sting;

And likewise never was such wrong enacted,

Considering Who suffered, and the worth

Of Him in whom this nature was contracted.

Thus from one act diverse effects took birth;

The same death pleased the Hebrews and the Lord:

Opened the Heavens thereat, and shuddered earth.

No longer deem then difficult the word

When it asseverates that vengeance just

Was afterward avenged by a just sword.

But now I see how thought on thought is thrust

Upon thy mind, entangled in a skein

Whence it awaits release with eager trust.

*Why did not  
God let man  
ransom him-  
self?*

Thou sayest within: 'Yea, what I hear is plain,

But it is hidden from me why God chose

This only way our ransom to attain.'

My brother, this decree from eyes of those

Lies buried deep, whose wit is not mature

Within the flame of love that ripening glows.

Nevertheless as at this cynosure

Mortals long gaze, though little they discern,

Will I declare why this way was the truer.

Bounty Divine, that doth all envy spurn

Away from Him, sends burning sparks therefrom,

So lighting up the loveliness eterne.

*That which dis-  
tills from God  
is permanent,  
free, and in the  
divine likeness*

That which distills without a medium

From Him, has then no end, for permanence

Gives form and pressure where His seal has come.



That which rains down without a medium thence  
 Is wholly free, since not beneath the bar  
 Of changing secondary influence.  
 Things please Him most that in His likeness are,  
 For the All-irradiant sacred glow must be  
 Most living in the things most similar.  
 These coigns of vantage all humanity  
 Inherits, and if one of these it wants  
 Falls force perforce from its nobility.  
 Sin only is man's disinheritance,  
 Rendering him unlike the Highest Good  
 And less blancht therefore by its radiance,  
 And never he gains his former altitude  
 Except he fill the guilty void again,  
 Just penalty for pleasure ill-pursued.  
 Your nature, sinning in your Sire amain,  
 From such advantages as these was barred  
 Even as from Paradise; and such the stain  
 That in no manner could they be restored,  
 If thou with subtle wit the matter heed,  
 Except by passing one or the other ford:  
 Either that God's sole clemency concede  
 Redemption, or that human foolishness  
 Should expiated be by human deed.  
 Now let thine eye pierce into the abyss  
 Of the eternal counsel, close intent  
 As possible to my discourse of this.  
 Man could, within his finite limits pent,  
 Never atone, his pinions downward weighing  
 With meekness and thereafter obedient,  
 Far as he planned to soar by disobeying;  
 And this is why, though man himself would pay  
 His own atonement, he was barred from paying.  
 Whence Deity must needs in His own way  
 Bring man in perfect life again to birth,—  
 In one way, or indeed in both, I say.

*By the fall man  
 lost his freedom  
 and divine like-  
 ness, thus be-  
 coming subject  
 to death*

*Why human  
 atonement  
 might not suffice*

*Necessity of the  
 Incarnation*

But since the doer's deed is graced with worth  
     The more in measure as it more infers  
     The heart of bounty whence it issued forth,  
 Bounty Divine that stamps the universe,  
     Was fain to put in force His every mode  
     To liberate you from the primal curse;  
 Nor was nor shall be, since the first day glowed  
     Till the last night, so high and glorious  
     A progress on the one or the other road:  
 For, giving Self, was God more bounteous,  
     So making man sufficient up to rise,  
     Than if He simply had forgiven us;  
 Nor any other method might suffice  
     For justice, had the Son of the Most High  
     Not humbled Him, assuming mortal guise.  
 And now, with all thy yearning to comply,  
     Let me turn back to make one matter clear,  
     That we may see it together, eye to eye.  
 Thou sayest: 'I see the water, I see the air,  
     The fire, the earth and all their mixtures stay  
     But little while, then to corruption fare,  
 Yet nothing but created things were they;'   
     Wherefore, if what I have averred is sure,  
     They ought to be secure against decay.  
 The angels, brother, and the country pure  
     Wherein thou art, may be called generated  
     In all their being, as they are, mature;  
 But the elements whose names thou hast related,  
     And all the things that from their minglings flow,  
     Informed with power that was itself created.  
 Created was the matter in them so,  
     Created the informing influence  
     Within these stars that sweeping round them go.  
 Pluckt out from their potential elements  
     By light and motion of the holy fires  
     Are souls of every brute and of the plants.

*The elements  
 not distilled  
 directly from  
 the divine, but  
 through the  
 secondary influ-  
 ences of the stars*

But the Supreme Benignity inspires  
Your soul directly, and enamors her  
With Him, whom she forever then desires.  
And furthermore thou mayest hence infer  
Your resurrection, if thou think once more  
How human frames divinely fashioned were  
When our first parents both were framed of yore."

## VIII

## THE HEAVEN OF VENUS

The world was in its peril wont to hold  
 That the fair Cyprian was raying out  
 Wild love, in her third epicycle rolled;  
 Wherefore the ancient people went about  
 In antique error, not alone to pay  
 To her the sacrifice and votive shout,  
 But Cupid and Dionē honored they,  
 This as her mother, that one as her son,  
 Telling how he in Dido's bosom lay;  
 And named from her with whom I have begun  
 That planetary star which, now at brow  
 And now behind the shoulder, woos the Sun.  
 I had no sense of rising there till now,  
 But of our being there my Lady's favor  
 Gave proof, because I saw her fairer grow.  
 And as in flame we see the sparkles waver,  
 Or as within a voice a voice discern  
 One holding note, one shaking out a quaver,  
 So in that radiance other torches burn  
 In circle speeding variably fast,  
 Methinks in measure of their sight eterne.  
 Never from icy cloud so swift a blast  
 Swept, seen or unseen, that the interim  
 Would not have seemed long-drawn before it passed,  
 To one who should have seen approaching him  
 Those lights divine as they forsook the gyre  
 Begun among the lofty Seraphim.  
 And from among the foremost of that quire  
 Rang forth Hosannah, so harmonious  
 That ever to rehear it I desire.  
 Then one of them drew near alone, and thus  
 Began: "We all with eagerness are burning  
 At thy good will to give thee joy of us.

*Morning and  
evening star*

*Evidence of  
the ascent*

Of one orb, of one circling, of one yearning  
 With the Celestial Princes are we rolling  
 To whom once thou, from worldly matters turning:

'Ye the third Heaven by intellect controlling;  
 And to delight thee shall a quiet space  
 Be no less sweet, our love is so ensouling.'—

After mine eyes had sought my Lady's face  
 With reverence, and she of her assent  
 Had satisfied them, and assured her grace,

Then to the light which did such hope present,  
 I turned about, and,—“Tell me, who are you?”  
 Inquired in tone of tender sentiment.

Ah, when I so had spoken, how it grew  
 Transfigured to my vision, and enhanced  
 In size and brilliance, joy and joy thereto!

“The world,” he answered, thus enradiated,  
 “Held me short while, and had it longer been  
 Much harm that will befall had never chanced.

I am concealed from thee behind a screen  
 Of gladness that irradiates me round,  
 As swathes a creature its own silken sheen.  
 Much didst thou love me, with good reason fond;  
 For had I stayed below I would have shown  
 More of my love to thee than in the frond.

That left bank which is watered by the Rhone  
 When it has drunk the Sorgue up, would have held  
 Me in good time the master of its own;

And that horn of Ausonia, citadeled  
 By Bari, Gaeta, and Catona, and where  
 Tronto and Verde in the sea are quelled.

Already gleamed the crown above my hair  
 Of that dominion which the Danube purges  
 Abandoning its German banks; and fair

Trinacria, which on occasion merges  
 Pachynus and Pelorus in one gloom  
 Over the gulf that Eurys chiefly scourges

*The courteous  
 spirit quotes  
 the first line  
 of a canzone  
 of Dante*

*Charles Martel,  
 heir presumptive  
 to many  
 kingdoms*

*The poetry of  
 the map*

(Not through Typhœus, but through sulphur fume),  
 Would for her sovereigns be looking still,  
 Who should through me from Charles and Rudolph  
 come,

*The Sicilian  
 Vespers (A.D.  
 1282)*

Had not the subject folk, by lordship ill  
 Exasperated, been provokt to cry  
 Insurgent in Palermo: 'Kill them, kill!'  
 And had my brother been forewarned thereby,  
 He now were fleeing, lest it work him woe,  
 The greedy Catalonian poverty.  
 For he or his must make provision so,  
 Forsooth, his overladen bark aboard,  
 That none shall further lading seek to stow.

*The father  
 Charles, the  
 Cripple of Jeru-  
 salem, had but  
 the one virtue  
 (cf. Canto xix,  
 127-129)*

His nature, niggard from a generous lord,  
 Should be supported by such retinue  
 As would give little heed to till or hoard."—  
 "Since I believe the lofty joy that through  
 Me courses from your words, my lord and friend,  
 As to my own is patent to your view  
 Where all good has beginning and has end,  
 The gladder I; glad also that my wish, you  
 By looking into God can apprehend.

*How can a bad  
 son descend  
 from a good  
 father?*

You make me blithe; but put aside the tissue  
 Of doubt whereby your words have veiled my mind:  
 How from sweet seed can bitter fruitage issue?"—

*Arguing in the  
 manner of a  
 professor at  
 Paris or  
 Bologna*

So I; and he to me: "If I can find  
 An answer setting truth in evidence,  
 Thou'lt have before thee what is now behind.  
 The Good that turns the whole and that contents  
 The Realm thou mountest, in these bodies vast  
 Makes active virtue of its Providence;  
 And Mind in Itself perfect has forecast  
 The natures not alone, but has in charge  
 Along with them their welfare first and last.  
 Whence whatsoever thing this bow discharge  
 Alights to predetermined end, like dart  
 Unerringly directed to the targe.

If not, the Heaven where thou a pilgrim art  
 Would so in its effects come short of goal  
 That they would not be beautiful, but thwart,  
 Which could not be unless the minds that roll  
 These stars were in default, defaulting too  
 For leaving them at fault, the Primal Soul.  
 Dost thou require more proof that this is true?"—  
 "Not so; it is impossible, I see,  
 That Nature weary in aught of need to do."—  
 "Now say, were't worse for man," continued he,  
 "Were he on earth unsocial?"—"It were so,"  
 I answered; "that is obvious to me."—  
 "And can he be so if he live below  
 Without diversity of offices?  
 If well your master write about it,—No!"—  
 So he by inference drew up to this:  
 "Therefore perforce the roots of what is done  
 Among you are diverse; whence not amiss  
 Is one born Solon, Xerxes one, and one  
 Melchisedech, another who would fly  
 Fanning the welkin, losing thus his son.  
 Revolving Nature well her craft doth ply  
 Stamping her seal on wax of mortal clay,  
 Nor takes account of hostel, low or high.  
 Whence it occurs that Esau falls away  
 At birth from Jacob, and Quirinus rose  
 From Sire so mean that sired him Mars, they say.  
 Careers of children would conform to those  
 Of their begetters, like to like in kind,  
 But that Divine prevision overthrows.  
 Now frontest thou the truth that was behind;  
 But that thou know my joy in thy behoof,  
 With corollary will I cloak thy mind.  
 If she find Fortune from herself aloof,  
 Ever will Nature, like another seed  
 Out of its region, come to evil proof.

*Uniformity of  
 son with father  
 would make  
 social life  
 impossible*

*The corollary:  
 an application  
 of the lesson*

And if the world down yonder would take heed  
    To what the rudiments of nature teach,  
    Following these, well would her people speed.  
But ye pervert him to a priest, whose reach  
    Of nature fitted him for a belted knight,  
    And make a king of him who fain would preach:  
Therefore ye wander from the way of right.”—



## IX

## A GREAT LADY AND A POET PROPHECY

After thy Charles had thus, O Clemence fair,  
 Enlightened me, he told the frauds, he said  
 That his posterity would have to bear;  
 Adding: "Be silent till the years are sped;"  
 So that I naught can say, save that of right  
 Tears for these wrongs of yours shall yet be shed.  
 And now the spirit of that holy light  
 Had turned toward the Sun, that plenteous  
 Fountain of good to all things requisite.  
 Ah, souls deluded, creatures impious,  
 To wrench your hearts from such a blessed state,  
 Your brows tow'rd vanity directing thus!  
 And lo! another of those splendors great  
 Drew nearer, while its will for my content  
 Seemed from its features forth to radiate.  
 The eyes of Beatrice were on me bent  
 As heretofore, and to the thing I sought  
 Gave me assurance of her sweet assent.  
 "Soon be thy longing to fulfillment brought,  
 Blest spirit," said I, "and give me certitude  
 That in thyself I can reflect my thought."—  
 Whence the new light, from deep beatitude  
 Wherein it had before been singing, said  
 In manner of one delighting to do good:  
 "In that depraved Italian region spread  
 Between Rialto sitting by the sea  
 And where the Brenta and Piava head,  
 Rises a hill, not very loftily,  
 Whence there came down a flaming brand of yore,  
 Of that fair countryside the enemy.  
 From one root with it I arose, and bore  
 The name Cunizza, and here am overbowed  
 With splendor, since this star prevailed the more.

*Clemence the  
 wife, Robert the  
 son of the  
 speaker*

*Cunizza da  
 Romano*

*The March of  
 Treviso*

*Ezzelino (Inf.  
 xii, 110)*

*Remorse for sin  
disappears in  
Leihé (Purg.  
xxi)*

*Folco (or Foul-  
quet) of Mar-  
seilles, first  
troubadour, then  
monk, then  
bishop*

*A treacherous  
bishop*

But gladly conscience has to me allowed  
The cause of this my lot, without dismay,  
Though hard the saying, haply, to your crowd.  
This precious jewel of pellucid ray  
Our heaven adorning and to me most near,  
Left great renown, and ere it fade away  
Shall be quintupled this centennial year.  
Ah, let man look to make him excellent  
That the first life bequeath a second here!  
So reason not the rabble turbulent  
Which Tagliamento and Adigë include,  
Nor yet for being scourged are penitent.  
But at the pool shall Padua with her blood  
Soon stain the water of Vicenza red,  
Since against duty harden they their mood.  
One plays the lord and struts with lifted head  
Where Silë and Cagnano lately met,  
For trapping whom the snare is being spread.  
Feltro shall weep with bitter wailing yet  
For treason of her impious pastor,—nay  
Such caitiff never was in Malta set!  
Capacious must the bucket be that day  
Which of the Ferrarese shall hold the gore,—  
And weary he who ounce by ounce should weigh,—  
That this obliging priest will have to pour  
To prove him factious; gifts like this are due  
To match the life that land is noted for!  
Above are mirrors—thrones as called by you—  
Whence God in judgment doth upon us shine  
So that seem good to us these sayings true.”—  
Herewith she held her peace, and gave me sign  
Of being turned to other heed, whirled on  
As heretofore along the dance divine.  
The other joy, already known as one,  
Swam into vision as a thing illumed,  
Like a choice ruby smitten by the sun.

Brightness up there by rapture is assumed  
 Like laughter here on earth; but they who live  
 Below are shadowed as the soul is gloomed.  
 "All-seeing God," said I, "to thee doth give  
 Vision so inwardly with Him imbued,  
 Can no desire from thee be fugitive.  
 Therefore thy voice that gives beatitude  
 To Heaven, in concert with those fires divine  
 Who with their six wings make themselves a hood,  
 Why does it leave me in desire to pine?  
 Surely I would not wait thy questioning  
 Could I indwell thy spirit as thou mine!"—  
 "The widest vale of waters issuing,"  
 With these words his discourse to me began,  
 "Out of that sea the earth engarlanding,  
 Between contrasting shores so wide a span  
 Spreads to the sun, that what was just before  
 Horizon, soon appears meridian.  
 I was a dweller midway on that shore  
 'Twixt Ebro and Magra which, with passage short  
 Bars to the Genoese the Tuscan door.  
 For rise and set of sun of one report  
 Would be Buggeä and my native town,  
 Whose blood once warmed the waters of the port.  
 Folco they called me where my name's renown  
 Was noted, and this heaven is stampt by me  
 As on me once its influence rained down.  
 More burned not Belus's daughter, balefully  
 Both to Sichæus and Cretusa too,  
 Than I while it became my locks; nor she,  
 The Rhodopeian maid who had to rue  
 Demophoön's deceit; Alcides not  
 When Iole into his heart he drew.  
 Yet nowise grieve, but smile we in this spot,  
 Not at the fault which ne'er returns to mind,  
 But at the Worth that ordered and forethought.

*Dante prays the  
 soul of Folco to  
 reply to his un-  
 spoken question*

*The poetry of  
 the map*

*He can speak  
 truly and  
 serenely of his  
 time of sin  
 (Purg. xxvi)*

Here we behold the skill which has assigned  
 Itself so fair result,—discern the Good  
 Which with the world above atones mankind.  
 But that thou bear away in plenitude  
 Fulfilled those wishes native to this sphere,  
 With something further I perforce conclude.  
 Thou wouldest know who in this radiance here  
 Beside me scintillates, as in pure stream  
 A sunbeam tremulous in water clear.  
 Now learn that rests at peace within that beam  
 Rahab, and that our order, made her own,  
 Bears signet of her in degree supreme.  
 Into this heaven, where ends the shadowy cone  
 Cast by your earth, all other souls before,  
 She, in Christ's triumph, was received alone.  
 Meet was it in some heaven forevermore  
 Leave her as palm of the victorious hope  
 Achieved with one palm and the other; for  
 She lent her aid to the first glorious scope  
 Of Joshua upon the Holy Land,  
 That little stirs the memory of the Pope.  
 Thy City, the plantation of his hand  
 Who turned his back on his Creator first,  
 And from whose envy spring your woes, doth brand  
 And scatter far and wide that flower accurst  
 Whereby the shepherd into wolf is turned,  
 So that the sheep and lambs are all disperst.  
 The Gospel and the doctors great are spurned,  
 And only the Decretals studied well  
 For this,—as by their margin is discerned.  
 On this the Pope and cardinals do dwell:  
 Never on Nazareth is fixt their scan,  
 Where opened once his pinions Gabriel.  
 But holy parts of Rome, both Vatican  
 And other, chosen as the burial spot  
 Of the army whereof Peter led the van,  
 Soon shall be purged of the adulterous blot.”—

*Here ends the  
 shadow cast by  
 Earth*

*The golden  
 florin with the  
 stamp of the  
 lily*

*Profitable study  
 of ecclesiastical  
 law*

X

HEAVEN OF THE SUN: STARRY GARLAND OF SAGES

The primal and unutterable Worth  
 Gazing upon His Son's benignant face  
 With Love which both eternally breathe forth,  
 Made all things that revolve through mind or space  
 With so much order that whoso looks aright  
 Can never want some image of His Grace.  
 Then, Reader, lift straight up with me thy sight  
 To the high wheels, where the two motions come  
 To that point where they each on other smite,  
 And there begin to enjoy His masterdom  
 Who loves His work within Him with such love  
 As never to withdraw His eye therefrom.  
 Look, how that circle oblique, the bearer of  
 The planets, is at present branching thence  
 To appease the world that calls them from above;  
 And were their road not bent, much influence  
 In Heaven would be unfruitful, and down here  
 Almost all virtue drained to impotence;  
 Did it at less or greater angle veer  
 From the right line, deficiency were dire  
 Both up and down, in either hemisphere.  
 Now on this foretaste of the heart's desire,  
 Remain, O Reader, on thy seat to brood,  
 For it will charm thee long before thou tire;  
 I set it forth; do thou partake the food;  
 For I have made me scribe of such a theme  
 As claims the whole of my solicitude.  
 The Minister of Nature all-supreme,  
 Who with the worth of Heaven the world is sealing  
 And measuring our time out with his beam,  
 Joined with that region named above, was wheeling  
 Along the spirals of that thoroughfare  
 Where daily earlier is his revealing;

*The intersection  
 of the Equator  
 and the Eclip-  
 tic (cf. Canto i,  
 37-39)*

*The Sun, to  
 which Dante  
 had impercep-  
 tibly arisen*

And I along with him, but unaware  
 Of the ascending, more than one perceives  
 Thought in the mind before its advent there.  
 'Tis Beatrice herself who leading gives  
 From good to better, so immediately  
 Her act no vestige of duration leaves.  
 Within the sun where I had entered, see  
 How brighten spirits into recognition,  
 By light, not color, manifest to me!  
 What though I summon genius, art, tradition,  
 That splendor could be imaged nevermore,  
 But faith may see,—ah, let us crave the vision!  
 No wonder our low fancy cannot soar  
 To such an altitude, for never yet  
 Was eye that did not quail the sun before.  
 So bright was the fourth family, here set  
 By the High Sire, imbuing them with bliss,  
 Showing how He doth breathe, and how beget.  
 "Give thanks to Him," began now Beatrice,  
 "Thank Him who of the angels is the Sun,  
 Who by His Grace has lifted thee to this!"—  
 So ardently subdued to orison  
 Devoted, heart of mortal yet was not,  
 So eager for divine surrender none,  
 As at these words my own desire was hot;  
 And so my love to Him was wholly plighted  
 That Beatrice was in eclipse forgot.  
 Nor this displeased her; but her eyes so lighted  
 With laughter, that the splendor of her mien  
 Drew off to other things my mind united.  
 For other living lusters, passing keen,  
 Centered upon us like a chaplet round,  
 Still sweeter in their voice than bright in sheen.  
 The daughter of Latona thus enwound  
 Is seen at moments when so teems the air  
 It holds the thread wherewith her zone is bound.

*The smile of  
 Beatrice*

*The garland of  
 souls is like the  
 halo around the  
 moon*

Manifold are the jewels dear and fair  
 In Court of Heaven, whence I returning come,  
 And none to carry them away could dare;  
 Of these the carols of those light were some:  
 Who takes not wing up thitherward to fly  
 May better ask for tidings of the dumb!  
 When, chanting so, those blazing suns on high  
 Had wheeled about us thrice, in radiance  
 Like stars the steadfast pole forever nigh,  
 Ladies they seemed, who break not from the dance,  
 But stop in silence listening for the chord  
 Whereto their tripping steps again advance.  
 And from within one light came forth this word:  
 "Since radiance of Grace, enkindling so  
 True love to be the multiplied reward  
 Of loving, doth in thee so brightly glow,  
 Leading thee up that stairway where none save  
 To reascend can ever go below,—  
 Whoever should deny thee if thou crave  
 Wine from his flagon, would be free no more  
 Than water seeking not the level wave.  
 Thou wouldest know what blossoms now enflower  
 This garland, circling with blithe roundelay  
 The Lady beautiful, thy heavenly dower.  
 Lamb of the holy flock was I, whose way  
 Is shepherded by Dominic, and here  
 Fair is the fattening if they do not stray,  
 The brother to my dexter hand most near  
 Was Albert of Cologne, my master best,  
 And I was Thomas of Aquino there.  
 And if to name and number all the rest  
 Thou cravest of me, let thy look awhile  
 Circle up here along the garland blest.  
 That other splendor issues from the smile  
 Of Gratian,—one and the other court he lent  
 Such aid as Heaven with rapture to beguile.

*Dancing the  
 successive  
 stanzas of the  
 ballata*

*Speaks the great  
 Dominican  
 theologian,  
 Thomas Aquinas*

*Albertus Magnus*

*Gratian*

- Peter Lombard* And of our chorus the next ornament  
 Was Peter, who gave Holy Church his mite  
 Like the poor woman of the Testament.
- Solomon* The fifth and loveliest of our circle bright  
 Breathes from such love that all the world below  
 Looks eagerly for tidings of its plight:  
 Within it is the lofty spirit, so  
 Imbued with wisdom that, if truth be true,  
 No second rose so much to see and know.
- Dionysius* Next it the radiance of that taper view  
 Which, still in mortal flesh, did best divine  
 The angelic nature, and its service due.
- Orosius* Next in that little light see, smiling, shine  
 That advocate of Christian ages whose  
 Fair Latin edified Saint Augustine.  
 Now, if in sequence as my praise pursues  
 From light to light, thy mental eye is veering,  
 Thou cravest for the eighth, and canst not choose.
- Boethius* Therein the sight of Good Supreme is cheering  
 The holy soul who renders evident  
 The world's deceit to whoso well give hearing.  
 The body whence on earth it hunted went  
 Lies in Cieldauro, and from torture came  
 Into this peace and out of banishment.  
 And yonder see the fervent spirits flame  
 Of Isidore, of Bede, of Richard who  
 In contemplation more than man became.
- Siger of Brabant, who lectured at Paris on Theology* This one, wherefrom to me returns thy view,  
 Shines from a soul to thought so dedicate  
 That death, he thought, too slowly on him drew:  
 This is the light of Siger, beyond date,  
 Who in the Street of Straw once lecturing,  
 Had enviable truths to demonstrate."—
- The Bride is throughout the Poem, of course, the Church* Then as a chiming horologe doth ring  
 To rouse the Bride of God to matin-song  
 Unto the Spouse, His love soliciting,



Where one part draws another and thrusts along  
    With tintinnating note harmonious  
    Whence love in well-tuned spirit waxes strong,—  
The glorious wheel I saw revolving thus  
    And render voice to voice, in concord blending  
    With sweetness never to be known of us,  
Save in that place where joy is never-ending.

## XI

## THE CANTO OF ST. FRANCIS

O mad solicitude for mortal things,  
 Alas, how all the reasonings are vain  
 That make thee heavily beat down thy wings!  
 One played the clergyman, one followed gain,  
 One aphorisms of Hippocrates,  
 One strove by violence or craft to reign,  
 One throve by theft, one by juristic pleas,  
 One in the pleasures of the flesh enwound  
 Was wearing out, and one gave up to ease,  
 While I, set free from all that dreary round,  
 Aloft in Heaven, with Beatrice at hand,  
 So passing glorious a welcome found.  
 When every member of that circling band  
 Had gained the point where he had been before,  
 He stayed, as stays the taper in the stand.  
 And now I heard the former voice once more  
 Within that luster, while yet more intense  
 Became the brilliance of the smile it wore:  
 "As I am kindled in His effluence,  
 So, gazing into the Eternal Light,  
 I trace thy thoughts back to their rudiments.  
 Thou doubtest, and wouldst have me sift aright  
 My utterance, and in plain language bring  
 The matter to the level of thy sight  
 Where lately I said,—'Where is good fattening,'  
 And where I said, 'No second ever was,'  
 And here is need of clear distinguishing.  
 The Providence which rules the world with laws  
 Mysterious, so that every mortal eye  
 Is baffled ere it to the bottom draws  
 (So that to wed with Him who espoused her by  
 The blessed blood with loud proclaim, the Bride  
 Might go with greater nuptial loyalty,

*To follow  
 Hippocrates  
 meant the prac-  
 tice of medicine*

*St. Thomas  
 Aquinas, Doc-  
 tor angelicus*

*Canto x, 96  
 Canto x, 114*

And with more self-security beside),—  
 Ordained two princes who should both attend her,  
 One upon either hand to be her guide.

All fire seraphical was one defender;  
 The other one with wisdom all aflame,  
 Light to the world cherubic in its splendor.

*Francis*  
*Dominic*

Of one I mean to speak, for both may claim  
 Our praises, whichsoever one intending,  
 Because their labors had a single aim.

Between Topino and the stream descending  
 The hill that blest Ubaldo erewhile chose,  
 A fertile slope is from the mountain bending,

*One of the geo-  
 graphical de-  
 scriptions which  
 the Poet loves  
 (cf. ix, 82-93)*

Whence hot and cold upon Perugia blows  
 Through Porta Solē; while behind it groan  
 Gualdo and Nocera their heavy woes.

Where drops the highland less abruptly prone,  
 A sun upon the world began ascent,  
 As somewhiles out of Ganges dawns our own.

Wherefore let any, when this place is meant,  
 Say not 'Ascesi,' which were short to say,  
 But, fittier to speak, say 'Orient'!

*Assisi, sup-  
 posed to be de-  
 rived from  
 "Ascesi," I rose*

He, from his rising not yet far away,  
 Began to give the world some handsel of  
 The comfort-giving virtue of his ray;

And, still a boy against his father strove  
 For such a Lady, men unbar the door  
 As willingly to death as to her love;

*He loved the  
 Lady Poverty,  
 but the father  
 opposed the  
 match*

And in the spiritual court, before  
 His father's face, united with her stood,  
 Whereon from day to day he loved her more.

Reft of first husband she in widowhood  
 Till after the eleven hundredth year,  
 Contemned, obscure, awaited him unwooded;

Nor aught availed that men of her should hear  
 As with Amyclas found unterrified  
 By voice of him who struck the world with fear;

Nor aught availed her faith and courage tried,  
 So that, let Mary at the foot remain,  
 She mounted up where Christ was crucified.  
 But lest too enigmatic be my strain,  
 From my long parable shalt thou infer  
 That Poverty and Francis are these twain.  
 So blithe and so harmonious they were,  
 Their love, their wonder, their communion sweet  
 In all around set holy thoughts astir;  
 Whence venerable Bernard first thought meet  
 To go unshod, and after so great peace  
 He ran, and running blamed his lagging feet.  
 O wealth untold, good fruitful of increase!  
 Giles bares his feet, Sylvester his behind  
 The Bridegroom, such the Bride's peculiar grace.  
 Then with his Lady and with the house assigned,  
 All with the humble cord begirded now,  
 Went forth that Father and that Master kind;  
 Nor did he cravenly abase his brow  
 As son of Peter Bernardone, or feel  
 Cast down by strange contempt. But his stern vow  
 With regal dignity did he reveal  
 To Innocent the Pope, by whom was granted  
 For his religious order the first seal.  
 As multiplied the poor folk who had panted  
 To follow him whose life-work marvelous  
 Were better in the glory of Heaven chanted,  
 This Master-shepherd's holy zeal for us  
 Was sealed with crown of the Eternal Spirit  
 A second time through Pope Honorius.  
 Then preached he to the Soldan proud (to merit  
 The palm of martyrdom he would have borne)  
 Christ and his followers; but since to hear it  
 He found unripe that folk, who put to scorn  
 Salvation, and lest vain should be the quest,  
 Returned to harvest of the Italian corn;

*Sealed by the  
Church*

*Sealed by the  
Holy Spirit*

'Twixt Tiber and Arno on the rocky crest  
 From Christ's own hand the final seal he won,  
 Borne for two years upon his limbs imprest.  
 When God, allotting him such benison,  
 Vouchsafed to draw him to the meed above  
 That he had gained by being a lowly one,  
 Unto his brethren, as right heirs thereof,  
 Bequeathed he all his wealth, his Lady dear,  
 Bidding them hold fidelity in love;  
 And from her breast the lofty spirit clear  
 Desired to pass to its own realm divine,  
 And for its body willed no other bier.  
 Judge now the worth of one who could combine  
 With him to pilot over the high seas  
 The Bark of Peter by the starry sign!  
 Such was our Patriarch; and they who please  
 To follow him, obeying his command,  
 Take on such freight of good commodities.  
 But now so greedy is become his band  
 For novel fodder, nothing can withhold  
 The sheep from roaming through wild pasture-land;  
 And these, the more by distant lure cajoled,  
 And truant more from him in field and wood,  
 Emptier of milk return they to the fold.  
 Some truly, boding evil likelihood,  
 Cleave closely to the Shepherd, but so few  
 That scanty cloth would furnish every hood.  
 Now, if I fail not of my meaning true,  
 If an attentive listener thou art,  
 And if thy memory the words review,  
 Will thy desire be satisfied in part,  
 For thou wilt see what plant they chip away,  
 And thou wilt take the reprimand to heart:  
 'Where is good fattening, if they do not stray.' "

*Sealed with the  
 stigmata of the  
 Crucified God*

*Judge of the  
 worth of my  
 master Dominic,  
 worthy colleague  
 of such a saint*

*Degenerate  
 friars*

## XII

## THE CANTO OF ST. DOMINIC

Before the final cadence ceased to sound  
     Forth from the blessèd spirits radiant,  
     Began the holy millstone to whirl round,  
 But of full circling something yet did want,  
     When now another ring around it fuses  
     And matches dance with dancing, chant with chant,  
 Chant that as passing far excels our muses,  
     Our sirens, in those mellow flutings blew,  
     As the first sunbeam by reflection loses.  
 As curve two bows the filmy cloud-rack through,  
     Both parallel in line and color, done  
     As Juno bids her maid the picture do,  
 The outer taking birth from the inner one  
     In hues reëchoed like that wandering voice  
     Consumed by love, as vapor by the sun,  
 Giving mankind a signal to rejoice  
     That what God promised Noah shall abide,  
     Whence deluge nevermore the world destroys:  
 So the two garlands bright about us plied  
     Of roses an eternal coronal,  
     And the outer to the inner so replied.  
 Then, when the dance and lofty festival  
     Both of the flaming lights and of the quires  
     Light beside light jocund and blithesome, all  
 Of one accord grew quiet, song and fires  
     (Even as the eyelids cannot choose but shut  
     Or lift themselves again as will requires),  
 From one of the new lights a voice came out,  
     Which made me, needle to that pole, incline  
     My body round toward its whereabouts;  
 And it began: "The Love that makes me shine  
     Prompts me to laud the other Leader great,  
     For whose sake here is spoken fair of mine.

*The great Doc-  
 tors of the  
 Divine forming  
 a double halo of  
 circling and  
 singing flames*

*Speaks the  
 Franciscan  
 Doctor Sera-  
 phicus, St.  
 Bonaventura,  
 in praise of  
 Dominic*

Each with the other should be celebrate  
 That, as united they were militant,  
 Their glory may together radiate.  
 The army of Christ, at cost exorbitant  
 Equipt anew, was moving slow of pace  
 Mistrustful, and too few the flag to plant,  
 When He who kings it over time and space  
 Provided for His knighthood jeopardied,  
 Not for their worth, but only of His Grace;  
 Coming, as said, to succor of His Bride  
 With champions twain, whose prowess and behest  
 Rallied the stragglers who had turned aside.  
 Where first the winds breathe gently from the west  
 To open the fresh foliage of spring,  
 Whence smiles Europa being newly drest,  
 Not far from where the waves are thundering  
 Wherein the sun, because his course is great,  
 Somewhile from man concealed is slumbering,  
 There Calahorra sits, the fortunate,  
 Protected by the great escutcheon where  
 The lion doth succumb and subjugate.  
 Therein was brought to birth the lover dear  
 Of Christian Faith, athlete in holiness,  
 Kind to his own, to enemies severe.  
 Such life-power in his mother did possess  
 The infant spirit at its first creation  
 As to transform her to a prophetess.  
 Fulfilled at holy font the declaration  
 Between him and the Faith, of sacrament  
 Wherein each pledged the other with salvation,  
 The woman who for him had given assent  
 Beheld the admirable fruit, in dream,  
 Of him and of his heirs; and with intent  
 That what he was he might in grammar seem,  
 A spirit went bearing the possessive word  
 Of his Possessor hence to christen him,

*Royal arms  
 of Castile*

And called him Dominic: for I record  
     The story of the husbandman whom Christ  
     Chose for his aid in vineyard of the Lord.  
 True messenger he seemed and friend of Christ,  
     For the first love obtaining masterdom  
     In him, was the first counsel given by Christ.  
 His nurse discovered him, awake and dumb,  
     Many a time recumbent on the ground,  
     As who should say, "To this end am I come!"  
 O thou, his father, Felix truly found!  
     And thou, his mother, verily art Joan,  
     If that interpretation be the sound.  
 Not as men now are spent for worldly boon  
     Following Thaddeus and the Ostian,  
     But, loving the true manna, very soon  
 He grew a mighty teacher, and began  
     About the vineyard to be vigilant,  
     Where bleach the vines if bad the husbandman;  
 And of the Seat that once to righteous want  
     Benigner was (not by her own offense  
     But that of her degenerate occupant!),  
 He begged,—not two or three for six dispense,  
     Not income of first vacant benefice  
     Not tithes, of God's own poor the competence,—  
 But leave against the world, that goes amiss,  
     To battle for the Faith, from seed whereof  
     Sprang twice twelve plants that garland thee with  
     bliss.  
 Then, both with learning and with zealous love,  
     By apostolical authority,  
     Like torrent urged by fountain up above,  
 Dasht in among the shoots of heresy,  
     Smiting with greater vehemence, the more  
     Resistance proved to be refractory.  
 From him thenceforward various runnels pour  
     To irrigate the Catholic garden spot,  
     Making its bushes greener than before.

*No other word  
 is permitted to  
 rime with the  
 name of Christ  
 (cf. Canto xiv  
 and elsewhere)*

*Authorities in  
 medicine and  
 canon law (the  
 Decretals). Cf.  
 opening passage  
 of Canto xi*

*Boniface the  
 Eighth*



If such was one wheel of the Chariot  
 Wherein rode Holy Church for her defense  
 Over the field where civil strife was hot,  
 Clearly shouldst thou perceive the excellence  
 Of the other wheel, which Thomas had discussed  
 Before I came, with courteous eloquence.  
 But where the outmost rim was wont to thrust  
 Its pressure, is the track deserted,—so  
 That now there is the mold where was the crust.  
 His household, who set forward straight to go  
 With feet upon his prints, are turned again  
 So that they set the heel upon the toe;  
 And by the harvesting will soon be seen  
 How bad the tillage, when the tare will rue  
 Because it is excluded from the bin.  
 Yet, whosoever search our volume through  
 Leaf after leaf, might chance some page upon,  
 Reading, "To what I was remain I true!"  
 But from Casal or Acquasparta none,  
 Whence come they who the writing so apply  
 That one lets loose, and draws it tighter one.  
 The effluence of Bonaventura am I,  
 From Bagnorea, who did evermore  
 Put last the left-hand care in office high.  
 Here, of the earliest of the barefoot poor,  
 Illuminato and Augustin, made dear  
 To God while circled with the cord of yore.  
 Hugh of Saint Victor is among them here,  
 And Peter Mangiadore, and Peter of Spain  
 Who in twelve books down there is shining clear,  
 The Prophet Nathan, Metropolitan  
 Chrysostom, Anselm, that Donatus who  
 Stooped to the first art, a grammarian;  
 Here is Rabanus, here beside me too  
 Shines the Calabrian abbot Joachim,  
 Gifted with spirit of prophetic view.

*The two wheels  
 of the Chariot  
 of the Church*

*A violent shift  
 of metaphor!  
 Dante, like  
 Shakespeare,  
 often defies the  
 rules of the  
 rhetoricians*

*The household of  
 Francis going  
 back on their  
 tracks*

*Acquasparta re-  
 laxes the Rule of  
 the order; Casale  
 would have  
 made it more  
 rigid*

*The other lights  
 of the outer  
 wreath of saints*

In rivalry such Paladin to hymn,  
    Moved me with courtesy-enkindled mood  
    Friar Thomas, by the fair discourse of him,  
And with me prompted all this Brotherhood.”—

## XIII

## ST. THOMAS AQUINAS GIVES A LESSON IN RELATIVITY

Let any fancy, who would fain not balk  
     At what I now beheld, and hold the sign  
     Firm as a rock before him while I talk,  
 Fifteen stars that in various quarters shine  
     And so the sky with their effulgence steep,  
     They pierce the densest cloud-rack vespertine;  
 Fancy that Wain whereto the bosom deep  
     Of our own Heaven suffices night and morn,  
     Punctual to the wain-pole's mighty sweep;  
 Fancy thereto the opening of that horn  
     Commencing at the axle's point, whereby  
     The Primal Wheel is still revolving borne;  
 Fancy these made two clusters in the sky  
     Like that one which the daughter of Minos made  
     When, chilled, she felt herself about to die,—  
 One cluster with the other garlanded  
     And in such fashion whirling both the two  
     That one was leader and the other led:  
 Then will he have some shadow of the true  
     Star clusters, as in counter-dance they gleam,  
     Circling the point that I was rooted to,  
 Since these outstrip the things we see or dream,  
     As does that Heaven which is the swiftest o'er us  
     The moving of Chiana's oozy stream.  
 Not Bacchus, not Apollo was their chorus,  
     But Persons three in being all divine,  
     In one, divine and human, to restore us.  
 The song and circle measured, turned in fine  
     To us those holy lusters, more by token  
     Passing from heed to heed with joy benign.  
 'Mid those concordant powers was silence broken  
     Then by that light whence the achievements of  
     The marvelous mendicant of God were spoken:

*The double garland of saints; astronomical comparison (cf. the comparison beginning Canto xiv)*

*The horn is the constellation of the Little Bear*

*See note about the Chiana, Inf. xxix*

*St. Thomas  
Aquinas now  
explains his  
attribution of  
highest wisdom  
to Solomon  
(x, 114)*

*Adam and  
Christ, both  
direct creations  
of the Divine,  
must have been  
superior in  
wisdom to  
Solomon*

*"A religious  
hymn breathing  
the sense of  
mystery that  
surrounds the  
Divine"  
(Terraca)*

"One sheaf being thrasht," the words fell from above,  
 "And that its grain is to the garner gone,  
 To beat the other beckons me dear love.  
 Thou thinkest of the bosom whence was drawn  
 The rib wherewith to fashion the fair face  
 Whose palate cost the world so dear a pawn,—  
 And of that lance-pierct bosom, by whose grace  
 Sin past and future was so compensated  
 That the atonement in the scale outweighs,—  
 Thou thinkest man may be illuminated  
 By no more light than was infused in those  
 By that same Power who both of them created:  
 And hence thy wonder when my story goes  
 That the Fifth Light with knowledge so profound  
 Was gifted, that 'No second ever rose.'  
 Open thine eyes now and behold how bound  
 Is thy belief with what I shall reply,  
 Both in the truth like center in the round.  
 That which can die, and that which cannot die,  
 Are nothing save the splendor of that Word  
 In love begotten by our Father High;  
 Because that Living Light which is transferred  
 So from its Source, it may not be undone  
 From it or from that Love which is their third,  
 Its mirrored rays by its own benison  
 In nine subsistencies together brings,  
 Itself eternally abiding One.  
 Thence passes through successive lowerings  
 To the ultimate potential elements,  
 Producing naught but brief contingent things;  
 And these contingent things I take in sense  
 Of things from seed engendered animal,  
 Or void of seed, through heavenly influence.  
 The wax of these, and that which molds it all,  
 Are variable, since less and more hath shined  
 Beneath the stamp the idea original;

Whence comes about that, after its own kind,  
 The selfsame tree bears worse and better fruit,  
 And ye are born endowed with various mind.  
 Now were the wax exactly worked to suit,  
 Did stars supreme their influence assemble,  
 The luster of the seal were absolute;  
 But Nature mars,—wherein she doth resemble  
 The craftsman who about his labor goes  
 And keeps the knack, although his fingers tremble.  
 Yet if the fervent Love seal and dispose  
 Clear insight of the Primal Power, achieved  
 Perfection on that substance fully shows.  
 Dust of the ground, made worthy thus, received  
 Full animal perfection once therethrough;  
 Thus wrought upon, the Virgin once conceived.  
 So that I give my sanction to thy view  
 That human nature never yet has been,  
 Nor can be, such as in those persons two.  
 Now if no farther forward should I win,  
 ‘How then consider him without a peer?’  
 Upon this question would thy words begin.  
 But to see clearly what is not yet clear,  
 Think who he was and why petitioning  
 When he was bidden ask the guerdon dear.  
 Thus have I spoken but exhibiting  
 That he was king, and asked for plenitude  
 Of wisdom to become a worthy king,—  
 Not for the number of the multitude  
 Moving these spheres, nor if *necesse* chained  
 With a contingent ever could conclude,  
 Nor if prime motion is to be maintained,  
 Nor if in semicircle could be drawn  
 Triangle, save right angle be retained.  
 Whence, taking this with my discourse foregone,  
 A kingly prudence is that peerless prize  
 The shaft of my intention hits upon.

*St. Thomas  
 now “dis-  
 tinguishes”*

*The four high-  
 est branches of  
 knowledge, as  
 taught at the  
 University then:  
 theology, logic,  
 metaphysic,  
 geometry*

*Solomon asked  
 and got prac-  
 tical wisdom for  
 his trade of king*

And if on 'rose' thou turnst discerning eyes,  
 Thou wilt perceive that it is spoken of  
 Kings,—who are many, and but few the wise.

Thus qualified, in what I said above  
 Agreement with thy view is found complete  
 As to our primal Sire and Him we love.

Let this be ever lead upon thy feet  
 To make thee like a weary man move slow  
 When *Yes* and *No* the inner vision cheat;  
 For he among the fools is very low  
 Who affirms or who denies in either kind  
 Without distinction of the *Yes* and *No*,  
 Since often to false bias are inclined  
 Opinions men too hastily attain,  
 And mere conceit then trammels up the mind.

His putting forth from shore is worse than vain  
 Who wanting skill goes fishing for the true,  
 Since as he went returns he not again;

Melissus gives the proof of this to view,  
 And Bryson and Parmenides, who reckt  
 Not of their goal, however fast they flew.

So with Sabellius, Arius, and each sect  
 Of fools who were as swords to Scripture pure,  
 Distorting features otherwise correct.

Let folk in judgment never be too sure,  
 As when into the field the peasant goes  
 To reckon up the ears not yet mature;

For I have seen beneath the winter snows  
 The wild brier rugged seem, and troublesome,  
 And then upon its summit bear the rose;

And once I saw a gallant vessel come  
 Straight over-seas, completing her emprise,  
 To perish entering the port at home.

Seeing one thief, another sacrifice,

Let not Dame Joan and Gaffer John presume  
 To penetrate them with divining eyes,  
 For one may rise, the other fall to doom."—

*The applica-  
 tion: warning  
 against igno-  
 rant reading and  
 snap judgments*

*"Donna Berta o  
 Ser Martino"*

## XIV

## THE SPIRITUAL BODY. GALAXY OF THE CROSS IN MARS

From center unto rim, or back about,  
     Vibrates the water in a rounded vase,  
     As smitten from within or from without.  
 Into my mind came suddenly the case  
     That here I moot, soon as the effluence  
     Of glorious Saint Thomas held his peace,  
 Because of likeness in the incidence  
     Of his discourse and that of Beatrice,  
     Whom it pleased after him thus to commence:  
 "This man has need (yet does not tell you this  
     Either by voice or thinking) to pursue  
     Another truth to where it rooted is.  
 Inform him if the light which doth endue  
     Your substance with its blossom, will remain  
     As now it is forevermore with you;  
 And if it shall remain with you, explain  
     How ye can bear it and conserve your sight  
     When ye shall be made visible again."—  
 Just as, impelled by urgency of delight,  
     They who are wheeling in the dance as one,  
     Lift up the voice and make the movement light,  
 So at the prompt devoted orison  
     The holy rings gave proof of rapture new,  
     Turning in wondrous choral unison.  
 Whoso laments our death down here, therethrough  
     To win new life above, did never see  
     Refreshment here of the eternal dew.  
 That ever-living One and Two and Three  
     Reigning in Three Two One beyond all date,  
     Unbounded and all-bounding Trinity,  
 Did each among those spirits celebrate  
     Three times, with such melodious utterance  
     As were fit meed for merit passing great.

*The voice of  
 Thomas had  
 come from the  
 rim; that of  
 Beatrice flows  
 back from the  
 center*

*The mystery of  
the glorified  
body after the  
resurrection*

And where divinest was the radiance  
 Of the inner ring, a quiet voice replies  
 (To Mary such the Angel's voice perchance!):  
 "Long as the festival of Paradise  
 Shall have continuance, so long our love  
 Engarments us with such a radiant guise.  
 Its brightness will keep pace with movement of  
 Our zeal, and zeal with vision, which is full  
 As it has grace its proper worth above.  
 When with the glorious holy flesh the soul  
 Shall be re clothed, our personality  
 Will dearer grow, since wholly beautiful.  
 Thereby will wax the light, that largess free  
 Vouchsafed us by Supreme Excellence,  
 Light which enables us His Face to see;  
 Wherefore the vision needs must wax intense,  
 The fervor wax that from the vision came,  
 And wax the radiance proceeding thence.  
 But even as a firebrand, darting flame,  
 Is by its living glow victorious  
 So that its visible form remains the same,  
 So will this luster now enswathing us  
 Be vanquisht by the flesh, that now from sight  
 This many a day by earth is covered thus.  
 Nor can we weary of so great a light;  
 Strong shall the bodily organs be concerning  
 All that may minister to our delight."—  
 So ready and with such an eager burning  
 To cry "Amen" appeared to me both quires,  
 As for the mortal body showed their yearning,  
 Not for themselves alone, but for their sires  
 And mothers and perchance for others dear  
 Ere they became imperishable fires.  
 And lo! a luster all around, of sheer  
 Surpassing splendor dawned upon the view,  
 Like an horizon that is growing clear.



And even as at early nightfall, new  
    Gleamings begin to spot the sky again,  
    While true appears the vision, yet not true,  
Methought up there, beginning to grow plain,  
    Novel existences, a circling host  
    Outside of those circumferences twain.  
O very sparkling of the Holy Ghost,  
    Smiting mine eyes with such an instant flare  
    They might not brook it, in the luster lost!  
But Beatrice showed so smiling and so fair,  
    It must be left with visions that elude  
    The memory, which cannot follow there.  
Therefrom mine eyes, resuming aptitude  
    To lift their lids, showed me with her alone  
    Lifted to loftier beatitude.  
That I was lifted to a higher zone  
    Was told me by that star's enkindled smile  
    Which ruddily beyond the common shone.  
In that deep language of the heart whose style  
    Is one in all, to God I here address  
    Oblation for the gift bestowed the while;  
Nor yet was consummated in my breast  
    The sacrifice, before I knew the prayer  
    To be propitious and with favor blest,  
For with a rubeate glory past compare  
    Showed splendors forth, within two rays of light,  
    Such that I cried: "O Sun that makes them fair!"  
As, 'twixt the two poles of the world, gleams white  
    The Galaxy with less and greater stars,  
    Putting in doubt the very erudite,  
Thus, constellated in the depth of Mars,  
    Fashioned those rays the venerated sign  
    Formed in a round by crossing quadrant bars.  
Here conquers memory all wit of mine:  
    Because that Cross was lamping so with Christ  
    I cannot find similitude condign;

*The smile of  
Beatrice always  
marks the rise  
into a higher  
sphere*

*The ruddy  
Heaven of Mars*

*Imagine the  
"Milky Way"  
in the form of  
a Cross*

*For the rime  
of. Canto xii*

But whoso takes his cross and follows Christ  
     Shall yet forgive me what I leave unsaid,  
     Seeing that dawnlight flashing with the Christ.  
 From arm to arm, and between base and head,  
     Lights were in motion, brightly scintillant,  
     Passing and counterchanging as they sped.  
 So swift and slow and level and aslant  
     Are seen here, ever altering their mien,  
     The atomies of bodies long or scant  
 Adance upon the ray that cleaves the screen  
     Of shadow often, which for their defending  
     Men cause by handicraft to intervene.  
 And, as the harp or violin, with blending  
     Of many chords, sweet tinkling makes to him  
     Who hears the music without comprehending,  
 So from the lights there shining bright or dim  
     Gathered along the Cross a melody  
     That raptured me, oblivious of the hymn.  
 High laud it was,—so much was clear to me,  
     Because “Arise and conquer” was the strain  
     Which still I heard uncomprehendingly.  
 So charmed was I therewith that until then  
     Naught had there ever been that could impose  
     On me the fetters of so sweet a chain.—  
 Perchance too bold appear such words as those,  
     Disparaging the charm of those fair eyes  
     Gazing wherein my longing has repose.  
 But whoso comprehends how as they rise  
     Those living seals of all things loveliest  
     Augment, nor had I turned to that emprise,  
 May excuse me from the accusation, stressed.  
     But to excuse me, thus my truth approving;  
     For here is not cast out the rapture blest,  
 Becoming ever purer upward moving.

*Hymn of the  
 Warrior-Saints*

*Because the  
 eyes of Beatrice  
 reflect the  
 Divine (cf.  
 Purg. xxxi,  
 the closing  
 strain)*

## XV

DANTE'S ANCESTOR BEGINS THE SKETCH OF THE MEN  
AND MANNERS OF OLD FLORENCE

Benignant will, resolved into the blest  
 Love whence forever benefactions flow,  
 As greed in wicked will is manifest,  
 Laid silence on that tuneful lyre, and so  
 Withheld those holy chords from sounding on,  
 That Heaven's right hand now twitches, now lets go.  
 How can be deaf to righteous orison  
 Those Beings who, to open wide the door  
 For my petition, paused in unison?  
 'Tis right he should eternally deplore  
 Who, out of love for what does not abide,  
 Forfeits that other love forevermore.  
 As through the pure and tranquil eventide  
 A flash is seen from time to time to race,  
 Setting the calmest eyelids staring wide,  
 Appearing like a star that changes place,  
 Save that, where first enkindled is its light  
 Nothing is missed, and it goes out apace,—  
 So shot from the arm extending to the right  
 To bottom of the cross, a star of them  
 That make the constellation there so bright;  
 Downward it ran along the radiant stem  
 Like fire in alabaster shining through,  
 Nor from the fillet once broke forth the gem.  
 Such love the shade of old Anchises drew,  
 If credit we our poet passing great,  
 When in Elysium his son he knew.  
 "O kinsman mine! Grace incommensurate  
 Upon thee shed! to whom, as unto thee,  
 Was ever opened twice the Heavenly gate?"—  
 So spake that light; whence thereto eagerly  
 I turned,—then to my Lady,—in such wise  
 That from both quarters awe came over me;

*The light of  
 Dante's greatest  
 ancestor falls  
 down the shaft  
 of the mystic  
 cross like a  
 "shooting star"*

For such a smile was glowing in her eyes  
 That, with mine own, methought I' touched the  
     bound  
     Both of my grace and of my Paradise.  
 Thereafter, blithe of look and blithe of sound,  
     That soul to salutation added speech  
     Past my conception, it was so profound;  
 Of choice concealed he not what he would teach,  
     But force perforce, because the lofty sense  
     So overshot the mark of mortal reach.  
 But when the bow of burning love less tense  
     Became, and his discourse came down and stood  
     Upon the plane of our intelligence,  
 The first expression that I understood  
     Was: "Benediction on Thee, Trine and One,  
     For guerdoning my kinsman with such good!"—  
 "A grateful and long fast," he followed on,  
     "From reading the Great Book where black on white  
     Is set down ineffaceably, my son,  
 Hast thou now satisfied within this light  
     I hail thee from, thanks to her favor who  
     Clad thee with plumage for the lofty flight.  
 Thou deemest that thy thought to me flows through  
     From the First Cause, even as from unity,  
     If that be known, the five and six to you,  
 Not asking who I am, nor why in me  
     Appears a gratulation more elate  
     Than elsewhere in this jocund company.  
 Thou deemest true: in this life small and great  
     Are gazing in that Mirror whence, before  
     Thou thinkest, thy reflections emanate.  
 But that the Holy Love mine eyes adore  
     In vigil never broken, hunger-spent  
     With sweet desire, may be fulfilled the more,  
 O let thy voice, secure, glad, confident,  
     For will and yearning find the fitting word  
     Whereto is predetermined my consent."—

*The Great Book  
 in which he  
 reads, the Mir-  
 ror in which  
 they gaze, are  
 images of the  
 Divine Mind*

Thereon I turned to Beatrice, who heard  
 Before I spake and gave assent, whereby  
 The growing wings of my desire were stirred.  
 "When dawned on you the Prime Equality,  
 Love and intelligence for each of you  
 Became of equal poise,"—so answered I;  
 "Because the Sun that lit and warmed you through  
 Holds in its heat and light such balance fit  
 That all comparison falls short of true.  
 But mortal wing of will and wing of wit,  
 For reason well apparent to your sight,  
 Fail of the balanced pinions requisite.  
 Whence I, who with the heart alone requite  
 Thy dear paternal welcome, feel my lame  
 Mortal disparity of will and might.  
 I do entreat thee, living topaz-flame,  
 Set as a gem upon this jewel choice,  
 To satisfy my craving with thy name."—  
 "O leaf of mine, who made me even rejoice  
 Expecting thee, thy root behold in me!"—  
 Beginning thus, replied to me the voice;  
 Then said: "That soul who gave thy family  
 The surname, and has round the Mountain gone  
 On the first terrace, a long century,  
 Was thy great-grandfather, and was my son:  
 Befits that respite thou for him bespeak  
 From his long travail, with thy orison.  
 Florence, encircled by her wall antique,  
 Whence tierce and nones are tolling evermore,  
 Lived peaceable and temperate and meek.  
 Her arm no clasp, no crown her forehead bore,  
 No silken petticoat, with girdle gay  
 More tempting to the eye than she who wore.  
 Not yet did little daughter's birth dismay  
 The father; not too early did they mate,  
 Nor yet was dowry ruinous to pay.

*Dante humbly  
 urges the inade-  
 quacy of mortal  
 wit to discourse  
 with a being in  
 whom deed bal-  
 ances desire*

*The father of  
 Dante's great-  
 grandfather tells  
 of the social  
 condition of  
 Florence in the  
 eleventh century*

*Hills from  
which travelers  
from the north  
got the first view  
of Rome and of  
Florence  
Great citizens in  
their day (cf.  
Inf. xvi, 37,  
and next canto)*

No house was then of children desolate;  
Not yet Sardanapalus came to show  
What in a chamber he can perpetrate.

Not yet outflown was Monte Mario  
By your Uccelatoio,—which as outflown  
In soaring up, shall be in falling low.

I saw in belt of skin and clasp of bone  
Bellincion Berti, and his lady quit  
The mirror with complexion still her own;

I saw the Nerli and the Vecchio fit  
The leathern jerkin with good countenance,  
With spindle and with flax their ladies sit.

O happy women! each yet in advance  
Sure of her burial, and none beguiled  
Of comfort in her bed because of France.

One, keeping watch above her cradled child,  
Would soothe it with the babbling idiom  
Whereto the fathers and the mothers smiled;

And one, the thread from distaff drawing home,  
Gathered her brood and prattled fables how  
Came Trojans to Fiesolë and Rome.

*A woman of  
doubtful repu-  
tation, and a  
man whom  
Dante detested*

A marvel then Cianghella's brazen brow,  
Or Lapo Salterello, as complete  
As Cincinnatus and Cornelia now.

To life of citizen in house and street  
So fair and quiet, to so great a fame  
For neighbor loyalty, to home so sweet,

My mother gave me, calling Mary's name;  
And so, within your ancient Baptistry,  
Christian and Cacciaguida I became.

Moronto and Eliseo brothered me;  
My Lady came from Valley of the Po,  
Whence was thy surname handed down to thee.

I followed Kaiser Conrad then, with so  
Good service that he belted me a knight,  
So much my prowess made his favor grow.

Beneath his banner followed I to fight  
That ill-famed law whose folk usurp control,  
To pastors' shame, of what is yours by right.  
There disentangled by those caitiffs foul  
Was I from the delusive world, whose quest  
Infatuate debases many a soul,  
And came from martyrdom unto this rest."—

*Second Crusade,  
preached by St.  
Bernard (1147)*

## XVI

## "OLD, UNHAPPY, FAR-OFF THINGS"

O petty our nobility of blood!

If thou prompt men to make their boast of thee  
Down here, where faints our yearning for the good,

Never shall this seem wonderful to me,

For where desire is not perverted, yea  
In Heaven itself, I felt such vanity.

In truth, thy cloak so quickly shrinks away,  
That, add we not a frequent piece thereto,  
Time with the shears goes round it day by day.

*Dante addresses  
his ancestor as  
if he were royal  
("you" instead  
of "thou")*

With *You*, which Rome at first permitted, *You*,  
Wherein her children now least persevere,  
Proudly began I my discourse anew,

Whence Beatrice, a little distant here,  
By smiling called to mind that dame who coughed  
At first recorded fault of Guenevere.

"You are my Father," so began I soft,  
"You fill me for discourse with courage high,  
You lift me far above myself aloft.

So many rivulets are pouring joy  
Into my heart that happy is my tongue  
Seeing I can bear and not be rent thereby.

Tell then, beloved root whence I am sprung,  
Who were your forebears, what the years foregone  
That signalized themselves when you were young.

*Modern Flor-  
ence is the city  
of the Baptist,  
as the ancient  
was the city of  
Mars*

Tell me about the sheepfold of Saint John,  
What were the numbers and who were the folk  
Within it who the highest places won?"—

As if by breathing of the wind awoke  
Flame in a coal, so did I see that blaze  
Kindle at the caressing words I spoke,

And growing ever fairer to my gaze,  
With sweeter accent gentlier it said,  
But in no dialect of nowadays:



"From the first *Ave* to that childing-bed  
 Whereon my mother, now ensainted, through  
 Delivering of me was comforted,  
 Five hundred times and fifty and thirty drew  
 This circling fire to its own Lion apace,  
 Beneath his paw to kindle up anew.  
 My sires and I were native to that place  
 Where the last ward first intersects the course  
 Of the hot runner in your annual race.  
 Enough about my elders this perforce:  
 For as to whence they came and who they were,  
 Silence is more becoming than discourse.  
 All those at that time competent to bear  
 Weapons, the Baptistiry and Mars between,  
 Numbered a fifth of them now living there.  
 But the community, where intervene  
 Campi, Certaldo, and Figlinè now,  
 Pure to the humblest artisan was seen.  
 O how much better let such neighbors plow  
 Around Galluzzo, and let your border lie  
 At Trespiano, rather than allow  
 Their entrance, so to be offended by  
 The stench of Aguglion, and Signa's clown,  
 Who has for jobbery so sharp an eye.  
 Were folk who most on earth have fallen down  
 Not stepmother to Cæsar, but instead  
 Benignant, like true mother to her son,  
 One, made a Florentine by truck and trade,  
 Would have turned back to Semifonte again,  
 Where went about his grandsire begging bread.  
 Still would the Counts on Montemurlo reign,  
 The Cerchi be in Aconè's parish still,  
 Perchance the Buondelmonte on Greve's plain.  
 When mingled populations overfill  
 The city, evermore begins its woe,  
 As added victual makes the body ill.

580 x 686 +  
 (the number of  
 our days re-  
 quired for the  
 revolution of the  
 planet Mars)  
 gives about 1091  
 as the birth-year  
 of Cacciaguida

The city lay be-  
 tween the  
 Church of St. .  
 John and the  
 Ponte Vecchio  
 with the mutil-  
 ated statue of  
 Mars

That is to say,  
 if the clergy  
 had kept hands  
 off

And the blind bullock falls more headlong low  
 Than the blind lamb, and more onesword will cleave,  
 And often deeper than the five will go.  
 If Luni and Urbisaglia thou perceive,  
 How they have gone, and likewise pass away  
 Chiusi and Senigallia, to believe  
 That in like fashion families decay  
 Will seem opinion neither strange nor new,  
 Seeing that even cities have their day.  
 All your affairs are mortal, even as you,  
 The very brevity of life concealing  
 In some the creeping steps of death from view;  
 And as the lunar heaven, forever wheeling,  
 Covers and bares incessantly the shore,  
 So fickle Fortune is with Florence dealing.  
 Hence what I tell should seem no fable-lore  
 Concerning the renowned Florentines  
 Whose fame through lapse of time is known no more.  
 I saw the Hugos, saw the Catellines,  
 Filippi, Greci, Ormanni, Alberichi there,  
 Illustrious citizens in their declines,  
 And saw, as mighty as they ancient were,  
 With one of La Sannella, of Arca one,  
 Ardinghi and Bostichi and Soldanier.  
 Above the gateway newly weighed upon  
 By felony so heavy in its shame  
 That from the bark shall soon be jettison,  
 Dwelt then the Ravignani, from whom came  
 Count Guido down, and whoso to this hour  
 Has taken lofty Bellincione's name.  
 He of La Pressa wisely wielded power  
 Already, and the Galigaio claimed  
 Sword-hilt and pummel gilt in hall and bower.  
 Greatly the pale of Minever was famed,  
 Sacchetti, Giuochi, Fifanti, and Barucci,  
 And Galli,—and others by the bushel shamed.

*The Ravignani  
 descended  
 through the good  
 Gualdrada from  
 Bellincione  
 Berti*

The parent stock whence budded the Calfucci  
 Was great already, and to curule chair  
 Already drawn Sizii and Arrigucci.  
 Ah, mighty did I see them who despair  
 Because of their own pride! and the Balls of Gold  
 In all her prowess made our Florence fair.  
 So likewise did the ancestors of old  
 Of those who, when your see is vacant, find  
 Fat profit by abiding in the fold.  
 That haughty breed, so dragon-fierce behind  
 The fugitive, but let your teeth be seen  
 Or purse belike, seem lambs, they grow so kind,  
 Was on the rise, although from people mean,—  
 Whence Ubertin Donato felt disgrace  
 When his wife's father made them kith and kin.  
 Down from Fiesole to market-place  
 Had gone now Caponsacco,—Judah there  
 And Infangato, burghers in good grace.  
 Incredible, yet true, what I declare:  
 The little circuit had an entrance way  
 Called after them whose emblem is the Pear.  
 All wearers of the fair insignia  
 Of the great Peer, whose name and valor grim  
 The feast of Thomas calls to mind today,  
 Knighthood received and privilege from him;  
 Though with the populace today unite  
 That man who guards the scutcheon with a rim.  
 Gualterotti and Importuni were at height;  
 And had they for new neighbors suffered dearth  
 More tranquil would the Borgo be tonight.  
 The house from which your tears have had their birth,  
 Because its just resentment killed your joyance  
 And with the blood of many stained the earth,  
 Was honored in itself and its alliance:  
 O Buondelmonte, by what evil daring  
 Didst flee at others' prompting its affiance!

*Giano della  
Bella*

*The Amidei,  
whose murder  
of young  
Buondelmonte  
for slighting  
their alliance  
is the tradi-  
tional origin of  
the factions of  
Guelph and  
Ghibelline*

Glad would be many who are now despairing,  
 If God had to the Ema relegated  
 Thyself, when first toward the City faring.  
 But meet it was that Florence consecrated  
 A victim, while her last peace was prevailing,  
 To that bridge-warding marble mutilated.  
 With folk like these, nor yet were others failing,  
 Did I see Florence in such deep repose  
 That she had no occasion yet for wailing;  
 I saw her people glorious with those,  
 And just, so that the Lily never stood  
 Reversed upon the lances of her foes,  
 Nor dyed vermilion yet by party feud."—

*The old banner  
 showed a white  
 lily in a red  
 field; the Guelfs  
 reversed the  
 colors. See the  
 plates of the  
 two shields*

#### Note

It has not seemed desirable to fill the margins with references and explanations. Those interested in the history of old Florence will know where to look. For biographical information and anecdote Toynbee's Dictionary is the obvious repertory. The reader will find profit in looking up Bellincion Berti and his daughter, the good Gualdrada (Inf. xvi, 37). The historical student soon perceives that the viewpoint in these cantos is very much that of an old Tory. The new families, like the Cerchi, were often useful citizens. And the institution of the guilds is nowhere here referred to, although economically, politically, socially, even intellectually, of primary importance and immeasurable influence.

## XVII

## DANTE'S EXILE AND JUSTIFICATION

As who makes fathers chary of undue  
    Promise to children, questioned Clymenë  
    If what he heard against himself was true,  
Even such was I, and such perceived to be  
    By Beatrice and by the Holy Lamp  
    Who previously had changed his place for me.  
Then said my Lady to me: "Do not damp  
    The flame of thy desire, but let it soar  
    Well making manifest the inward stamp;  
Not that thy words may make our knowledge more,  
    But that thou mayst acquire the habitude  
    To tell thy thirst that we for thee may pour."—  
"Dear parent stock, raised to such altitude  
    That, as to earthly minds is evident  
    No triangle may two obtuse include,  
Thus do contingent things before the event  
    Exist for thee, still gazing where take head  
    All times together with the present blent;  
While in the company of Virgil led  
    Up and along the spirit-healing slope  
    And down throughout the region of the dead,  
I heard discourses grievous in their scope  
    Touching the remnant of my life, although  
    Well squared against the blows of Chance by Hope:  
Wherefore my will were well content to know  
    What fortune is approaching to molest;  
    For bolt foreshadowed strikes a lighter blow."—  
So to that selfsame light that had address  
    Beforehand me, I said as willed to say  
    By Beatrice, and mine own will confest.  
Not with blind riddles which in former day  
    Ensnared the credulous, ere yet was slain  
    The Lamb of God who takes our sins away,

But with clear utterance and language plain  
 That fatherly affection made reply,  
 In his own smile withdrawn and shown again:  
 "Contingency, which is embounded by  
 The volume of your matter, is beheld  
 All pictured forth before the Eternal Eye,  
 Yet not thence of necessity compelled,  
 More than the vessel down the current steering  
 Is by the mirror in the eye propelled.  
 Therefrom comes, even as comes upon the hearing  
 Sweet organ music, to my sight the course  
 Of time already now for thee preparing.  
 As through stepmother proof to all remorse  
 Hippolytus from Athens fled of old,  
 So out of Florence shalt thou go perforce.  
 Already this is willed and sought,—nay hold  
 It good as done by him who plans thy fall  
 Where every day the Christ is bought and sold.  
 The hue and cry will hound as usual  
 The party wronged; and yet shall vengeance give  
 A witness to the truth dispensing all.  
 Thou art to forfeit as a fugitive  
 All held most dear: of arrows thou must bear,  
 This first the bow of banishment lets drive.  
 Thou shalt make proof what salt and bitter fare  
 Is bread of others, and what toils attend  
 The going up and down another's stair.  
 But what will heaviest thy shoulders bend  
 Will be the senseless company malign  
 With whom thou wilt to such a pass descend,  
 Who, ingrate all and maddened, will combine  
 In fury against thee; but thereafter soon  
 Their forehead will be red for it, not thine.  
 Their brutishness will in their very own  
 Deeds be avoucht, nor will thy fame be blurred  
 In having made a party all alone.

*Pope Boniface  
 Eighth*

*Dante's fellow-  
 exiles, so un-  
 worthy that he  
 shakes them off*

First hospitality shall be conferred  
 On thee by kindness of the Lombard great,  
 Who on the ladder bears the sacred bird,  
 Who will to thee be so considerate  
 That of the wish and boon between you two,  
 First will come that which else is granted late.  
 Beside him shalt thou see that hero who  
 Took from this mighty star at birth such mold  
 That his emprise will be renowned therethrough.  
 His worth the nations do not yet behold  
 Because his age is tender,—years but nine  
 These wheeling spheres have round about him rolled.  
 But ere the Gascon cunning undermine  
 The noble Henry, sparkles of his worth  
 In scorn of lucre and of toil shall shine.  
 So his magnificence shall yet show forth,  
 His foes will not be so predominant  
 That they could keep report of it from birth.  
 On him and on his favors do thou plant  
 Thy trust; through him shall many change degree,  
 Altering state, both rich and mendicant.  
 And bear thou written in thy memory  
 Of him, but tell it not,—and he revealed  
 Things past believing, even of those who see.  
 Then added: "Son, these glosses may be sealed  
 To what was told thee; snares are waiting thus  
 Behind few circles of the spheres concealed.  
 Yet be not of thy neighbors envious,  
 Seeing thy future life will long outlast  
 The forfeit of their deeds perfidious."—  
 Soon as that holy soul to silence passed,  
 Showing the pattern had been woven above  
 The web whereof myself the warp had cast,  
 Did I begin like one misdoubting of  
 His course, who craves advice from one of those  
 That, seeing, do correctly will, and love:

*Bartholomew  
 della Scala,  
 lord of Verona,  
 and Can  
 Grande della  
 Scala*

*Clement V and  
 Henry VII*

*Dante's fame  
 predicted*

"Well see I, Father, how my time of woes  
 To deal me such a buffet spurs along  
 As is the heavier when one heedless goes;  
 Whence it is good with foresight to be strong,  
 That, though bereft me be the dearest prize,  
 I forfeit not the others by my song.  
 Down through the world of bitter tears and cries,  
 And up the mountain side from whose fair height  
 Uplifted me my Lady with her eyes,  
 And afterward through Heaven from light to light,  
 Have I learned that which will, if I respeak,  
 For many have disrelish infinite;  
 And if to truth I prove a friend but weak,  
 I tremble lest my fame the forfeit pay  
 With those who are to call this time antique."—  
 At this the light wherein the treasure lay  
 Which I had found there, flasht with such suffusion  
 As golden mirror in the solar ray.  
 "A conscience darkened,"—then he made conclusion,—  
 "With self-shame, or another's, this being sung  
 Will wince indeed at every harsh allusion.  
 Nathless away be all dissembling flung,  
 And be thy vision wholly manifested,  
 And let them wince who feel their withers wrung;  
 For though thy word be grievous when first tasted,  
 It will forever after leave behind  
 A vital nourishment, if well digested.  
 This cry of thine shall do as doth the wind  
 That buffets most the topmost mountain crown:  
 Which no small pledge of honor wilt thou find.  
 For this among these Wheels, and up and down  
 The Mountain, and within the Vale of Woe,  
 Are shown thee spirits only of renown;  
 For restive is the hearer's mind, and so  
 Recalcitrant to faith, it holds aloof  
 From instances buried its ken below,  
 And from all else except explicit proof."—

*Were it not  
 prudent to be  
 "a timid friend  
 of truth"?*

*"lascia pur  
 grattar dov'è  
 la rogna"*

*Dante must  
 speak out*



XVIII

HOW THE SOULS FORM THE MYSTIC SYMBOL OF JUSTICE  
IN THE TEMPERATE STAR OF JOVE

Now in his inward thought with joy replete  
Was that blest Mirror, and I savored mine  
By seasoning the bitter with the sweet;  
And the Lady leading me to the Divine  
Said: "Shift thy thought to see my link unbroken  
With him who lightens every load malign."—  
Thereat I turned to look at the fond token  
Of my Consoler, and what love I viewed  
In the holy eyes is here perforce unspoken,  
Partly that words would be misunderstood,  
Partly that memory is unreturning  
If others guide not to such altitude.  
This only can I tell that point concerning,  
That, rebeholding her, my own affection  
Grew fetterless and free from other yearning.  
While the Eternal Joy without deflection  
Rayed upon Beatrice, and mirror-wise  
From her fair face appeased me by reflection,  
Subduing me with light of smiling eyes,  
"Turn round and hearken," thus to me she said,  
"Not in mine eyes alone is Paradise!"—  
As sometimes in the visage here is read  
The inclination, if of so much force  
That the whole soul thereby is riveted,  
So turning to my great progenitor's  
Sanctified radiance, the wish I found  
Yet somewhat further with me to discourse.  
Then he began to speak: "In this fifth round  
Of branches on the Tree that from the crest  
Sends life-sap down and never sheds a frond,  
Are souls who, ere they came among the blest,  
Were in the world below of so great fame  
Could noble Muse no richer theme request.

*The consoling  
eyes of Beatrice*

Observe the arms o' the Cross, and those I name  
     Will at the signal in such mode proceed  
     As in the cloud its fulminating flame."—  
 I saw along the Cross a luster speed  
     At name of Joshua: to ear and eye  
     The word did not anticipate the deed.  
 And at the name of Maccabæus high  
     Another spiral whirling flasht amain,  
     And that which whipt the top was holy joy.  
 Likewise for Roland and for Charlemain  
     Did my enraptured gaze two lights pursue,  
     As eye doth after flying falcon strain.  
 Afterward William drew, and Renouard drew,  
     And great Duke Godfrey drew mine eye by fire  
     Along that Cross, and Robert Guiscard too.  
 Then mingling with the other lights, the Sire  
     Whose spirit had discoursed with me made known  
     His artistry among the heavenly quire.  
 To my right hand I turned me at that tone,  
     My duty to behold in Beatrice  
     Either by language or by gesture shown,  
 And all her past and recent wont at this  
     Her look outrivaled, with so bright a ray  
     Her eyes were shining, and so full of bliss.  
 And as by greater comfort in essay  
     Of righteous doing, man becomes aware  
     Of virtue waxing in him day by day,  
 So, wheeling in a wider circle there,  
     A heaven of more extended scope I knew,  
     Seeing that miracle become more fair.  
 For now a shift of color met my view,  
     As when a woman's countenance, opprest  
     With blushful shame, resumes its pallid hue,  
 Such, when I turned about was manifest  
     Dawning in the white star of temperance,  
     The sixth that had received me to its breast.

*The smile of  
 Beatrice mark-  
 ing ascent to  
 the Heaven of  
 Jupiter*

I saw within that Jovial radiance  
 The flying sparks of love that there abound  
 Shaping our language out before my glance.  
 As birds, rejoicing in their pasture ground,  
 Start up together from a river dell  
 And gather in a flock, now long, now round,  
 So holy creatures in the lights that dwell,  
 Were flitting and were chanting, fashioning  
 Their flock to figures,—D and I and L.  
 First sang they, to their own notes fluttering,  
 Then, having fashioned one or the other sign,  
 Would hold their peace awhile and stay their wing.  
 O Pegaseä, glorifier divine  
 Of human wits, their life to render long,  
 As towns and kingdoms they, by aid of thine,  
 Brighten me with thyself to tell in song  
 Their shapes as I deciphered them in Heaven,  
 In these brief verses let thy breath be strong!  
 These then displayed themselves in five times seven  
 Vowels and consonants: I noted down  
 The members as they seemed by utterance given.  
 DILIGITE JUSTITIAM, first noun  
 And verb of all the figure were enscrolled,  
 QUI JUDICATIS TERRAM, followed on.  
 These in the M of the fifth word did hold  
 Such settled order there, that Jupiter  
 Seemed to be silver patterned out with gold.  
 And other lights I saw descending where  
 The apex of the M appeared their goal,  
 Chanting, I think, the Good that draws them there.  
 Then, as by stirring of a burning coal  
 Innumerable sparks are upward sped,  
 Prophetic omens to the simple soul,  
 So thence thousands of lights seemed spirited  
 To mount aloft, some lower and some higher,  
 By their enkindling Sun distributed;

*"Love Justice,  
 you that are  
 judges of the  
 earth"*

*The medieval  
 capital M re-  
 sembles the  
 Florentine lily,  
 the high medial  
 upward point of  
 which, slightly  
 changed, gives  
 the figure of an  
 heraldic Eagle*



*The stormy  
voice of Dante  
(cf. xvi, 133-  
135)*

*The florin, with  
the lily on one  
side and the  
image of the  
Baptist on the  
other, prompts  
Boniface to  
neglect Peter  
and Paul*

And lo! when settled into place each fier,  
I saw an Eagle as to head and breast  
Delineated by that patterned fire.  
He there who paints has none to guide, but best  
Guideth Himself, and from Him we divine  
The secret of the molding of the nest.  
The other blessed flock, content to twine  
A lily flower at first upon the M,  
With a slight flutter filled out the design.  
Sweet star, what jewels, and how many of them,  
Informed me that our Justice is the birth  
Of that sixth heaven whereof thou art the gem!  
Wherefore I pray the Mind wherein thy worth  
And motion start, that He take note whence come  
The fumes that dim thy radiance on earth;  
That he once more be wroth with all and some  
Who buy and sell within the Temple-door  
Built round with miracles and martyrdom.  
O heavenly host on whom I gaze, implore  
For them who still are here on earth, each one  
Misled by ill example!—War of yore  
Was waged by dint of sword, but now 'tis done  
Merely withholding, now here, and now there,  
The bread the pitying Father grudges none.  
But thou whose writ is only made to tear,  
Reflect that Peter and Paul are living yet,  
Who died for the vineyard thou art stripping bare.  
Well mayst thou urge: "I have my heart so set  
On that ascetic who in royal hall  
Was danced into the martyr's coronet,  
That I know not the fisherman nor Paul."—

# XIX

## THE DISCOURSE OF THE SYMBOLIC EAGLE

The image fashioned by the engarlanding  
 Souls who in sweet fruition took delight,  
 Stood fair before me, spreading either wing.  
 Each seemed a little ruby where a bright  
 Sunbeam appeared so burningly to sink  
 As to flame back again upon my sight.  
 And what I now am bound to tell, by ink  
 Was never traced, by ear was never heard,  
 Nor entered into heart of man to think:  
 For lo! I heard and saw that beakèd Bird  
 Give voice to *I* and *MY*, though understood  
 Were *we* and *our* as men conceive the word.  
 So it began: "Through being just and good  
 Raised am I to that glory far transcending  
 All mortal yearning for beatitude,  
 And left remembrance of my great intending  
 Upon the earth, but wicked people there  
 Follow the story not, although commending."—  
 As many an ember makes us feel the glare  
 Of one sole heat, so rang one melody  
 From many loves out of that image fair:  
 Whereon I prayed: "O flowers perpetually  
 Blooming from Joy eternal, breathing forth  
 Your odors that one fragrance seem to me,  
 So breathing, banish from me the great dearth  
 Which makes me for so long in hunger pine,  
 Finding not any food for it on earth.  
 Well know I that, though Justice the divine  
 Be in another Heavenly kingdom glassed,  
 Yours looks without a veil on the design.  
 Ye know how eagerly do I forecast  
 The hearing, and ye know what is that doubt  
 Which is within me such a long-drawn fast."—

*Dante prays  
 that his great  
 fast be broken*

As from the hood the falcon issuing out  
Conceals not her desire, but makes her fair,  
Lifting her head and fluttering about,  
So in my sight became that emblem, where  
Praises of Grace Divine were interwound  
With songs familiar to the happy there.  
Then it began: "Who turned the compass round  
The world, and Who in its circumference  
Set much both clear to sight and too profound,  
Could not in all the Universe condense  
His Worth so far but that His infinite  
Wisdom remained in overplus immense.  
In proof whereof, behold that first proud Wight  
Among all creatures supereminent,  
Falling unripe, through not awaiting light;  
Therefore too scanty a recipient  
Appears each lesser nature for that Good  
Which has no bound but by self-measurement.  
From this it follows that our sight, which should  
Out of that Mind supernal radiate  
Wherewith all things whatever are imbued,  
Can by its nature have no power so great  
But that its origin sees far afield  
Beyond the narrow limit of your date.  
Therefore no vision to your world revealed  
Can plumb eternal Justice to the ground,  
Just as the ocean to your eye is sealed;  
Awhile from shore ye may the bottom sound,  
And out of soundings in the unplumbed sea  
We know it still is there, though never found.  
Save from the never-clouded Source, may be  
No light, but rather everywhere is shade,  
Venom and shadow of carnality.  
Now amply is the covert open laid  
That kept the living Justice from thy sight,  
Whereof thou hast so frequent question made.

'For,' saidest thou, 'on Indus-bank a wight  
 Is brought to birth, where none is to direct  
 To Christ, nor who may read of Him, nor write,  
 And all his acts and wishes are correct  
 As far as human reason may perceive,  
 Whether in word or life without defect;  
 Faithless he dies, nor baptism can receive:  
 What is this justice which condemns the man?  
 What is his fault if he do not believe?'

Now who art thou to mount the bench and scan,  
 A thousand miles from what thou wouldst discuss,  
 With thy short vision reaching but a span?  
 Surely for him who cavils with me thus,  
 Were not the Scripture over you, the food  
 For subtle questioning were marvelous.

O earthly animals! O spirits rude!  
 Never the Primal Will was self-betraying,  
 Nor altered from Itself the Supreme Good.

Weighed is your human justice with Its weighing,  
 By no created goodness is It led,  
 Rather from It created good is raying."—

As wheels the mother-stork just overhead  
 When she has given her nestlings all their fill,  
 And they look up toward her comforted,

So thither was my brow uplifted still,  
 And circling so the blessed image flew  
 On wings propelled by force of many a will.

Wheeling it chanted, adding thereunto:  
 "My notes thou hearest heeding not their sense,  
 So mortals by Eternal Justice do."—

When quiet was that glowing effluence  
 Of Holy Ghost, still in the heraldry  
 That gained the Romans world-wide reverence,  
 "Up to this Kingdom," it resumed to me,  
 "Rose never one who had not faith in Christ  
 Before or since they nailed Him to the tree.

*The problem:  
 How can the  
 virtuous heathen  
 be condemned?*

*The stormy  
 voice again  
 strikes the high-  
 est peaks (note  
 the rime on  
 Christ)*

But many, mark, who cry aloud Christ! Christ!  
 Shall be less near Him at the Great Assize,  
 By very far, than some who know not Christ.  
 The Ethiop shall such Christians stigmatize  
 When the two colleges apart are led,  
 One poor, the other with the eternal prize.  
 To Christian monarchs what will not be said  
 By Persians, when the Book is open placed  
 Upon whose page their evil deeds are spread?  
 There 'mid the deeds of Albert shall be traced  
 That which will start the moving pen once more  
 To show the Realm of Prague become a waste;  
 There seen how men along the Seine deplore  
 The doing of that counterfeiter accurst  
 To perish by the bristle of the boar;  
 There seen the arrogance that sets athirst,  
 Driving both Scot and Englishman insane,  
 Whence both anon across the border burst;  
 There the soft life and lust of him of Spain  
 And the Bohemian,—never known to them  
 Was prowess, or held ever in disdain.  
 There to the Cripple of Jerusalem  
 Shall with an *I* the good be credited,  
 While the reverse is rated at an *M*.  
 There shall the greed and cowardice be read  
 Of him who wards the fiery Island,—tomb  
 Where the long journey of Anchises led;  
 And to denote him paltry, let the doom  
 In curt abbreviations be set down,  
 Infinite matter in a little room.  
 And foul to all be noted the renown  
 Of uncle and of brother, who deflower  
 Illustrious lineage, and each a crown.  
 And he who holds in Portugal the power,  
 And Norway shall be shown; and Rascia there  
 Who saw Venetian coin in evil hour.

*Philip the  
Fair*

*Charles of  
Naples. Evi-  
dently the Book  
kept in Roman  
numerals*

*Frederick, King  
of Sicily, whose  
misdeeds will  
crowd the page*

*The Venetian  
ducat and the  
florin were the  
standard coins  
everywhere*



O blest were Hungary, if she would bear  
No buffets longer; and Navarre in bliss  
If her own mountain but a rampart were!  
And let each one recall, in proof of this,  
How Nicosía and Famagosta groan  
Already for their beast, and take it amiss  
That he beside the others hold his own."—

*Henry of Lusignan, a beastly little King, who keeps pace with the "great powers" in evil doing*

## XX

## THE EAGLE CONTINUES TO DISCOURSE

When he who sheds through all the world his ray  
 Is from our hemisphere descending so  
 That everywhere the daylight fades away,  
 The sky, ablaze with him short while ago,  
 Is suddenly rekindled to our ken  
 By many lights that answer to one glow:  
 And I recalled this heavenly action when  
 The ensign of the world and of its head  
 Grew silent in the blessed beak again;  
 For all those living luminaries, made  
 Brighter than ever, were beginning chants  
 Out of my memory to lapse and fade.  
 O sweet Love, veiled in smiling radiance,  
 How ardent didst thou seem in those canorous  
 Flutes that breathed only holy meditative!  
 After the bright and precious brilliants o'er us,  
 Wherewith I saw the sixth heaven glittering,  
 Had made an end of their angelic chorus,  
 It seemed to me I heard a murmuring  
 Stream that runs limpid down from stone to stone  
 Showing the plenty of its mountain spring.  
 And as upon the cittern's neck the tone  
 Assumes its form, and in reed instrument  
 The vent-holes mold the breathing through it blown,  
 Thus, brooking no delay, incontinent  
 Did that soft murmur of the Eagle float  
 Up through the neck, as if it were a vent;  
 There became voice, and issued from the throat  
 Out through the beak, with words in unison  
 With longing of the heart whereon I wrote.  
 "That part in me which sees, and braves the sun  
 In mortal eagles," it prelusive said,  
 "Should now attentively be gazed upon;

*The voices of  
 the Just, blending  
 in the neck  
 of the Eagle,  
 issue like the  
 sound of falling  
 water, or of  
 musical notes*

- For of the fires whereof my form is made,  
 Those are in all their grades of most renown  
 Wherewith the eye is sparkling in my head.
- Who midmost as the pupil glitters down, *David*  
 He was the Holy Spirit's laureate  
 Who bore about the Ark from town to town;  
 Now knows he his song's merit adequate,  
 So far as subject to his will's control,  
 By the reward which is proportionate.
- Of five who curve along my brow, that soul *Trajan*  
 Neighboring nearest to the beak of me  
 Did the poor widow for her son console;  
 Now knows he dear the ransom is if we  
 Follow not Christ, by the experience  
 Of this sweet life, and of the contrary.
- Who next, along on the circumference *Hezekiah*  
 In question, follows on the upward way  
 Delayed his death by very penitence;  
 Now knows he that Eternal Judgment may  
 Be altered never, though a worthy prayer  
 On earth below tomorrows the today.
- The next, to set the Pastor in the chair, *Constantine*  
 Ill fruitage gathering from good intents,  
 Made Greek himself, the laws, and me down there;  
 Now knows he that the evil consequence  
 Of his good deed gives him no cause to grieve,  
 Although the world go all to ruin thence.
- Next in the downward curve dost thou perceive  
 Him who was William, whom those lands regret *William the*  
 Which weep that Charles and Frederick still live; *Good of Sicily*  
 Now knows he how the love of Heaven is set *and Apulia*  
 On a just king, and the effulgency  
 Of his appearance makes it patent yet.
- Down in the erring world who would agree  
 That Trojan Rhipeus in this round were fit *Rhipeus the*  
 The fifth among the holy lights to be? *Trojan (Æneid*  
*ii, 426)*

Now knows he much whereof our human wit  
     In Grace Divine can catch not any gleam,  
     Although his vision cannot fathom it."—  
 Like to the lark that in the morning beam  
     Upsoars, first singing and thereafter still,  
     Rapt with the sweetness of her song supreme,  
 Such seemed the imaged Emblem of the Will  
     Eternal, in accordance with whose bent  
     Created things their final ends fulfill.  
 And notwithstanding that my wonderment  
     Showed through me like the color through the glaze,  
     Yet could it not abide the time content,  
 But forced by virtue of its weight the phrase  
     Forth from my lips,—“What wonders these!” Oh  
     thence  
     I saw great revelry of flashing rays!  
 Thereon with kindling eye still more intense,  
     To me the Blessed Emblem made reply,  
     To hold me not in wondering suspense:  
 “I see that thou believ’st these things, since I  
     Report them to thee, but dar’st not avow,  
     For, though believed, they are hidden from the eye.  
 Thou doest like that one who may well allow  
     A thing in name, but who cannot define  
     Its essence if another show not how.  
 The Kingdom of Heaven suffers force benign  
     From living hope and loving fervency,  
     Able to overcome the Will Divine;  
 Not as man over man wins victory,  
     That which is craving to be quelled they quell,  
     And, conquered, conquer through benignity.  
 The brow’s first living soul and fifth may well  
     Astonish thee, because thou seest with those  
     Adorned the region where the angels dwell.  
 These left their bodies not, as men suppose,  
     Gentile, but Christian, each in firm faith cleaving  
     To crucifixion’s past or future throes.

*Dante's wonder  
 that Rhipeus  
 and Trajan are  
 redeemed*

For one from Hell, whence none returns retrieving  
 Good will again, did yet his bones resume,—  
 And living hope this guerdon was receiving,—  
 The living hope whence vital power should bloom  
 Through prayer to God for his upraising made,  
 So that his will could move to change his doom.  
 The glorious spirit whereof this is said,  
 Short while abiding in the flesh on earth,  
 Put faith in Him who had the power to aid,  
 And so belief enkindled on his hearth  
 True love, that when returned he to the grave  
 He was found fit to come unto this mirth.  
 So deep a fountain yielded grace to save  
 The other soul, no eye, however bright,  
 Of any creature pierced its primal wave;  
 And so in righteousness was his delight  
 That our redemption in the future, more  
 And more by Grace was opened to his sight:  
 Wherefore he put his trust therein, nor bore  
 Thenceforth the stench from heathendom arising,  
 Reproving the perverted folk therefor.  
 To him, a thousand years ere solemnizing  
 Of baptism, those three maids thou sawst, who  
 wheeled  
 Beside the dexter wheel, stood for baptizing.  
 Predestination! Ah, how far afield  
 Thy root from vision of their intellect  
 To whom the First Cause is not all revealed!  
 And be ye, mortals, closely circumspect  
 In judging, forasmuch as we, who see  
 The very God, know not yet all the elect;  
 And in such lack is our felicity,  
 For in this good our own good we refine  
 So that with Will Divine our wills agree.”  
 Thus by that emblematic form divine,  
 To make me feel the limits of my vision,  
 Was dealt to me delightful medicine.

*St. Gregory  
 made effectual  
 fervent prayer  
 for Trajan*

*Purg. xxix,  
 121-129*

As on the chorded lute the good musician  
    Pinching the strings supports the singer good,  
    Thus making more delightful the rendition,  
So I remember, while he thus pursued,  
    Beholding those two blessed lusters dance  
    Accordant, as the eyes in winking would,  
Moving their flamelets with that utterance.

## XXI

## HEAVEN OF SATURN

Already on my Lady's countenance  
     Mine eyes were bended, and my mind withdrew  
     With them from every other circumstance;  
 Nor was she smiling, but began thereto:  
     "Were I to smile thou wouldst become like fair  
     Semele, when she dust and ashes grew;  
 Because my beauty on the Palace stair  
     Eternal, shining in more bright relief  
     As thou hast seen, with our ascending there,  
 If not attempered, would be past belief  
     Effulgent, so that thy poor mortal sense  
     Would be but as the thunder-blasted leaf.  
 Raised are we to the Seventh Splendor, whence,  
     Now warmed beneath the Lion's burning breast,  
     Rains down its mitigated influence.  
 Let thy mind follow where thine eyes request,  
     And let them mirrors be for that reflection  
     Which in this mirror shall be manifest."—  
 Whoso could know how great was the refection  
     Mine eyes found in her features sanctified,  
     When drawn away perforce in new direction,  
 Might comprehend, by weighing the one side  
     With the other, how delighted I became  
     To do the bidding of my heavenly Guide.  
 Within the crystal that doth bear the name  
     The world around of its bright Leader, who  
     So ruled that perished every deed of blame,  
 I saw a Ladder all of golden hue  
     Burnished with light, and lifted up so high  
     Mine eyes were unavailing to pursue;  
 Then saw so many splendors downward fly  
     Along its rungs, all light the stars distill  
     Had, it appeared to me, been shed thereby.

*Ascending to  
 the Heaven of  
 Saturn, Bea-  
 trice withholds  
 the smile*

*The Golden  
 Ladder*

And as, at bidding of their nature's will,  
     Jackdaws together flock at break of day,  
     Bestirring them to warm their plumage chill;  
 Thereafter there are some who fly away  
     Without returning, others fly off where  
     They started from, and others, wheeling, stay:  
 In such a fashion came together there,  
     Methought, that scintillating company,  
     Soon as it lighted on a certain stair;  
 And one, which nearest us appeared to be,  
     Became so bright, I murmured in my thought:  
     "Well I perceive thy love that signals me."—  
 But she, by whom the How and Where is taught  
     Of speech and silence, pauses, whence aright  
     I do, against desire, inquiring not.  
 Whence she who saw my silence in the sight  
     Of That One to whose seeing all is shown,  
     Bade me,—“Appease thy yearning appetite!”—  
 And I began: “No merit of mine own  
     Renders me worthy that thou make reply,  
     But for her sake who bids me ask, made known,  
 O soul in blessedness, enshrouded by  
     The joyance that doth round about thee glow,  
     What places thee so near me; and tell why  
 Within this wheeling sphere keeps silence so  
     The dulcet symphony of Paradise  
     Devoutly sounding through the rest below.”—  
 “Thy mortal eye and ear are both amiss,”  
     He answered, “here aloft no songs are sung  
     For the same cause that smiles not Beatrice.  
 Down on the sacred ladder rung by rung  
     So far descended I to make thee graced  
     With words, and with the radiance round me flung;  
 Nor was it greater love that made me haste,  
     For equal love, or more, burns up above,  
     As makes the flaming clearly manifest;

*Dante humbly  
 asks two  
 questions of the  
 spirit*

*The eyes of  
 Dante could not  
 bear the smile;  
 his muddy  
 vesture of decay  
 is impervious to  
 the music*



But we, as prompted by Exalted Love,  
 To serve the purpose of the world so burn:  
 'Tis love allots,—thou seest the mode thereof.”—  
 “Full well, O holy lamp, do I discern  
 How love, left free, may in this Court suffice  
 For following the Providence eterne;  
 But ever this is baffling to mine eyes:  
 Wherefore among thy consorts thou alone  
 Hast been predestinate to this emprise?”—  
 Before I uttered forth the final tone,  
 The light an axis of its middle made,  
 Rapidly whirling as in mill the stone.  
 Thereon the loving spirit in it said:  
 “Focused on me is radiance divine  
 Piercing the mesh of that around me shed,  
 Whereof the virtue and my sight combine  
 To lift me so above myself, I see  
 The Fount Supreme whence doth this luster shine.  
 Thence comes the rapture all aflame in me,  
 For to my vision as it grows more bright  
 I match a flame of equal clarity.  
 But soul in Heaven with most access of light,  
 Seraph whose eye is most on God intent,  
 Could to thy question not reply aright,  
 For it is gulfed in the arbitrament  
 Unfathomed, of eternal law’s control,  
 Where all created sight is vainly bent.  
 Carry this back to every mortal soul  
 On thy return, that men no more presume  
 To lift their feet toward so high a goal.  
 The mind that here is flame, on earth is fume;  
 Consider then if it below can do  
 That which it cannot do, though Heaven assume.”—  
 His language such a limit round me drew,  
 From every further question I forbore,  
 Except to humbly ask him, “Who were you?”—

*The mystery of  
 Predestination*

*The beautiful  
site of the  
monastery of  
Fonte Avellana  
on Monte  
Catria*

"Craggs rise in Italy 'twixt shore and shore,  
And from thy fatherland not far away,  
So high, the thunderstorms below them roar,  
Making a hump whose name is Catria,  
And there a hermitage was consecrate  
Which used to be a place for men to pray."—  
With words like these did he inaugurate  
The third discourse: "On Godly service bent,  
I grew so used to feed on lenten cate  
Which had but olive juice for condiment,  
That here I passed the seasons hot and cold  
Lightly, in thoughts contemplative content.  
That cloister once bore fruitage manifold  
Unto these heavens, but now it yields no more,  
As must perforce hereafter soon unfold.

*St. Peter  
Damian*

There Peter Damian was the name I bore;  
Peter the Sinner was I in the fane  
Of Our own Lady on the Adrian shore.  
To me did little mortal life remain,  
When called to take, against my own accord,  
That Hat which shifts from bad to worse again.

*The stormy  
voice*

Came Cephas, the great Vessel of the Lord  
Came lean and barefoot, taking bit and sup  
From whatsoever hospitable board.  
Now serving-men are needed to hold up  
Fat modern pastors, one on either side  
And one before and one behind to prop.  
Their furs o'erflow the palfreys which they ride  
(How much, O Patience, hast thou yet to bear!)  
So that two beasts go underneath one hide."—

*Astounds the  
Poet himself*

Flames saw I at such cry from stair to stair  
Descending and whirling round in multitude,  
At every whirl becoming still more fair.  
Around this soul they flocking came, and stood,  
And lifted up such a resounding shout  
That here there could be no similitude,  
Nor, thunderstricken, could I make it out.

## XXII

## ST. BENEDICT; DANTE'S NATAL CONSTELLATION

Plunged in bewilderment I turned me thence  
     Round to my Guide, even as a little child  
     Runs ever where he feels most confidence;  
 And promptly as a mother's cadence mild  
     Is wonted to give courage to her son  
     Pallid and gasping,—so her words beguiled  
 My fear: "Enfolds thee not the benison  
     Of Heaven where all is holy? and canst thou doubt  
     That zeal for good prompts what in Heaven is done?  
 What perturbation had been brought about  
     Both by the singing and my smiling eye,  
     When thou hast been so startled by the shout?  
 Wherein, if thou hadst understood their cry  
     Which is a prayer, already would be clear  
     The vengeance thou shalt see before thou die.  
 Smites never down in haste the sword from here,  
     Nor tardily, excepting in his view  
     Who waits for it in longing or in fear.  
 But look about thee now to something new;  
     Thou shalt see spirits most illustrious,  
     Turning thy face round as I bid thee do."—  
 Compliant to her wish, I turned me thus,  
     And saw a hundred little globes of fire  
     By interchange of light more beauteous.  
 Like one who blunts the edge of his desire  
     Within himself, became I, diffident  
     Of question, lest I overmuch aspire.  
 And the most lustrous and preëminent  
     Among those pearly lights began to advance,  
     To make my wish concerning it content.  
 Within it then I heard: "Could but thy glance  
     Like mine perceive our interflaming Love,  
     Thy tacit thought would have found utterance;

*Stricken with  
 bewilderment,  
 the Poet is  
 reassured by  
 Beatrice*

*Speaks St.  
 Benedict*

*Monte Cassino,  
one of the most  
venerable mon-  
uments of the  
Christian world*

But lest thou linger from the goal above  
 I will make answer even to the scope  
 Of the request thou art so chary of.  
 Where lies Cassino on the mountain slope,  
 Up to the very summit dwelt of yore  
 The folk perverse who in delusion grope;  
 And I am he who first up thither bore  
 The name of Him who brought the human race  
 The Truth enabling us so high to soar:  
 Then shone upon me so abounding Grace  
 That from the impious worship which misled  
 The world, I drew each neighbor dwelling place.  
 These other fires were men whose spirits fed  
 On Contemplation, kindled by that heat  
 Whence holy flowers and holy fruits are bred.  
 Here Romuald and here Macarius meet  
 All my good brethren of the cloister who  
 Kept steadfast heart and stayed their truant feet.”—  
 And now I spoke: “The love thou givest to view  
 Talking with me, and the benevolence  
 Which I perceive aglow in all of you,  
 Dilate as genially my confidence  
 As the sun doth the rose, till she uncase  
 Her petals and exhale her perfume thence.  
 Wherefore I pray,—and tell me if such grace,  
 O Father, may perchance upon me shine,—  
 That I may see thee with uncovered face.”—  
 “Brother, up in the final sphere divine,”  
 Said he, “shall thy exalted wish be granted,  
 Where all the others are fulfilled, and mine.  
 There is mature and perfect and unscanted  
 Every desire; and in that realm of day  
 Alone all parts eternally are planted;  
 For it is not in space, nor doth it sway  
 On poles; and thither doth our ladder go,  
 Whence it is fading from thy sight away.

*Dante's prayer  
to Benedict*

*The Heavenly  
Ladder*

The Patriarch Jacob saw it long ago  
 Extend its upper reaches Heavenward yon,  
 When angels up and down seemed thronging so.

But now to clamber thither raises none  
 His feet from earth, and, though my Rule remain, *The "dread  
 voice" again*  
 Waste is the paper it is written on.

The abbey walls, that used to be a fane,  
 Are become robber dens, and every cowl  
 A sack that doth corrupted meal contain.

But heavy usance levies smaller toll  
 Counter to will Divine, than fruits that curse  
 With such insanity the monkish soul.

What Holy Church may have to disemburse  
 Belongs to them who in God's name invoke;  
 Not to one's kindred, nor to others worse.

The flesh of mortals is so frail that folk  
 Make good beginnings there, which do not hold  
 Till acorns ripen on the sapling oak.

Peter made his beginning without gold  
 Or silver, I with fast and orison,  
 And Francis humbly set about his fold.

And scanning the beginning of each one,  
 And then where it has wandered, thou wilt see  
 How white has been converted into dun.

But Jordan backward turned, in verity,  
 And ocean at God's will in flight perdue,  
 More wondrous were than rescue here would be."—

He spoke, and turned to his companions, who  
 Surrounding him, together closed their throng,  
 Then upward like a whirlwind all withdrew.

My gentle Lady urged me then along  
 With a mere wafture up that mystic stair,  
 So was her power upon my nature strong; *Ascent to the  
 Heaven of the  
 Stars*

Nor in our rising and descending here  
 By natural law, has ever been a flight  
 So swift as with my pinion to compare.

Reader, as I to that devout delight  
 Hope to return, for whose sake I deplore  
 Ofttimes my sins, and on my bosom smite,  
 Thou wouldst have pluckt thy finger nevermore  
 Out of the fire, ere I beheld the Sign  
 After the Bull, and was within its core!

*Splendid invocation to his  
 natal constellation,—The  
 Eternal Twins*

O glorious stars, whose influences shine  
 Pregnant with power, to whom is honor due  
 For whatsoever genius may be mine,

With you was dawning, darkening with you  
 He who is Sire of all mortality,

*In the year  
 1265 the Sun  
 was in Gemini  
 from 18th May  
 to 17th June.  
 The exact day  
 of Dante's birth  
 is not recorded*

When my first breath of Tuscan air I drew;  
 And then, when gift of Grace had made me free  
 Of the high wheeling sphere wherein ye roll,  
 Your very region was assigned to me.

*Speaks  
 Beatrice*

To you devoutly now suspires my soul,  
 Virtue soliciting and consecration  
 For the hard passage to the final goal.

"Thou art so near the Ultimate Salvation,"

So Beatrice began, "that it is meet  
 To have eyes keen and purified from passion.  
 Hence, before deeplier immerst in it,

Look down below and see what world expanse  
 I have already put beneath thy feet;

So that thy heart with utmost jubilance  
 Confront the Triumph of the multitude  
 Who through this ether-sphere blithely advance."—

*Survey of the  
 Solar System*

Then one and all the Seven Spheres I viewed  
 With backward gaze, and saw this globe of dust  
 Such that I smiled at its poor likelihood;

And to his counsel I most largely trust  
 Who holds it cheapest; and who turns him thence  
 To other thoughts may well be reckoned just.

Latona's daughter kindled on my sense  
 Without that shadow making her appear  
 Such that I held her once both rare and dense.

Hyperion, I could endure up here  
The radiance of thy son, and markt how move  
Maia and Dionë round about him near.  
Thence I perceived the tempering of Jove  
Father and son between, and thence the mode  
Of all their variations as they rove.  
Thence to me all the seven planets showed  
How vast they are, how swift they are, and how  
Far, far apart they are in their abode.  
With the Eternal Twins revolving now,  
I saw our madding little threshing floor  
Spread out from river mouth to mountain brow:  
Then turned I to the beauteous eyes once more.

*"l'aiuola che ci  
fa tanto feroci"*

## XXIII

## VISION OF THE HOST OF THE REDEEMED

As birdling the beloved leaves among  
     Having reposed with her sweet nestling brood  
     While night has over all her mantle flung,  
 Who, that she may adventure for their food,  
     Delighting in hard toil, and that she may  
     See the loved pledges of her motherhood,  
 Anticipates the hour on open spray,  
     And fired with eagerness awaits the light,  
     Vigilant ever until break of day:  
 So was my Lady standing at full height  
     Alert and watchful, lifting up her face  
     Thither where most the sun retards his flight;  
 Whence I, observant of her eagerness,  
     Became like one who wistfully doth pant  
     For his desire, and so takes heart of grace.  
 But now the interval of time was scant,—  
     I mean of my suspense until aware  
     That more and more the heaven grew radiant.  
 And Beatrice said: "Behold the army fair  
     Of Christ Triumphant,—all the harvest raised  
     By whirling influence of every sphere."—  
 It seemed to me that all her features blazed  
     And such a flood of rapture filled her eye  
     That I must pass it by perforce unphrased.  
 As at still midnight when the moon is high  
     Trivia smiles among the nymphs eterne  
     Who brighten every quarter of the sky,  
 Above a thousand lusters saw I burn  
     One Sun, enkindling round it all and some,  
     As does our sun the other lights supern.  
 And that illuminating Masterdom  
     Shot down a living splendor so intense  
     Into mine eyes that they were overcome.

*Beatrice  
expectant*

*The Harvest  
of Christ*



Oh, Beatrice, dear gentle influence!  
Now said she to me: "Thou art here controlled  
By force wherefrom there can be no defense.  
Herein the Wisdom, here the Power behold,  
That frayed from Heaven to Earth a thoroughfare  
For which the yearning was so long of old."—  
As fire, expanding beyond bound, doth tear  
The cloud asunder, and swiftly earthward fall  
Against its proper nature, through the air,  
So found my spirit in that festival  
Enlargement, and the bound of self forsook,  
Nor what it then became can now recall.  
"Open thine eyes," resumed she then, "and look  
Upon my very nature; thou hast seen  
Things that enable thee my smile to brook."—  
I was like one who feels the spell again  
Of a forgotten vision, and doth try  
To bring it back to memory, in vain,  
When I received this proffer, worth so high  
Tribute of thanks as could not be effaced  
Out of the chronicle of time gone by.  
Not all the tongues by Polyhymnia graced,  
That both from her and from her sisters drew  
Their lyric milk most honied to the taste,  
Could tell a thousandth part of what is true,  
Hymning the holy smile of Beatrice  
And on her holy face what light it threw.  
Whence, in depicting Paradise, at this  
The sacred Poem leaps perforce the theme,  
Like one whose way is cut by an abyss.  
But whoso notes its weight will never deem  
Me blamable if mortal shoulder bear  
But tremblingly a burden so supreme.  
For little bark can be no passage where  
The wave is cleft by my adventurous prow,  
Nor yet for pilot who would labor spare.

*Dante's eyes  
given virtue to  
see the smile of  
Beatrice*

*Cf. beginning of  
Canto ii*

"Why so enamored of my face art thou,  
 And turnest not to the fair garden-close  
 Blooming beneath the rays of Christus now?  
 The Word Divine became in yonder Rose  
 Incarnate; yonder are the lilies white  
 Whose fragrance did the way of life disclose."—  
 So Beatrice: and I, submitting quite  
 To what she urged, again free scope allowed  
 To the contention of my feeble sight.  
 Just as mine eyes, themselves beneath a shroud  
 Of shadow, have beheld a flowery lea  
 Laughing in light that streamed through rifted cloud,  
 So many a splendid throng now seemed to be  
 Lit from above by burning radiance, though  
 No fountain of those flashings could I see.  
 O Power benignant who dost mark them so,  
 Thou hadst withdrawn thee upward to give way  
 Before mine eyesight baffled by the glow!  
 The mention of the Rose whereto I pray  
 Morning and evening, utterly subdued  
 My soul to contemplate her greater ray.  
 When with her quality and magnitude  
 As she transcended here up there transcending,  
 That living star had both mine eyes imbued,  
 Behold athwart the heaven a torch descending,  
 Formed like a coronet, wherewith it crowned her,  
 About her in a fiery circle bending.  
 Whatever melody is sweet hereunder  
 Most wooingly to wake the heart's desire,  
 Would seem a cloud-bank rended by the thunder  
 Compared to the resounding of that lyre  
 Engarlanding the Sapphire beauteous  
 Whose holy azure tints the Heaven of Fire.  
 "I am the Love angelic circling thus  
 The lofty rapture of the womb, that blest  
 Hostel of Him who was desired of us;

*The Sun of  
 Heaven shows  
 just so much  
 light as the  
 mortal eye can  
 bear*

*The Virgin  
 Mary  
 Mother*

*The splendor  
 and music of  
 Gabriel*

And I shall circle until thou followest  
 Thy son, O Lady of Heaven, diviner making  
 The Sphere supreme because thou enteerst."—  
 So now the circling melody was taking  
 The seal, and all the other lights in fine  
 With name of Mary into song were breaking.  
 That regal mantle which doth all entwine  
 The rolling worlds, and hath its appetite  
 Most quickened in the breath and deeds divine,  
 Held far remote from us and at such height  
 Above my standing place its inner shore,  
 That vision of it dawned not on my sight.  
 Therefore mine eyes did not have power to soar  
 After the flame incoronate, who rose  
 Up to her Son where He had risen before.  
 As little child toward the mother throws  
 Its arms up, soon as it with milk is fed,  
 And grateful love in such a transport shows,  
 When each and all of those fair splendors shed  
 Their light upstretching, so an infinite  
 Love toward Mary in the act I read.  
 Before me still remained those splendors white,  
 And "Queen of Heaven" they all so sweetly chanted  
 That present with me yet is the delight.  
 Oh, how great plenty is laid up unscanted  
 In those abounding coffers that of old  
 Were husbandmen upon the ground they planted!  
 There live they, glad in treasure manifold  
 Which in captivity at Babylon  
 They gathered up with tears, forsaking gold.  
 There triumphs, under the exalted Son  
 Of God and Mary, now victorious  
 And with the council old and new, that one  
 Who holds the keys of gate so glorious.

*Probably the  
 ninth sphere,  
 "that first  
 moved" (Primum mobile)*

*They had received "the  
 Kingdom of  
 God as a little  
 child"*

*St. Peter*

## XXIV

## ST. PETER EXAMINES DANTE CONCERNING FAITH

*Beatrice prays  
for Dante*

"O chosen fellowship of the Lamb Blest  
At the great supper where He feeds you so  
That your desire is ever set at rest,  
Since Grace Divine doth on this man bestow  
Foretaste of viands from your feast above,  
Or ever death cut short his time below,  
Give heed to his immeasurable love,  
Bedew him somewhat: ye are quaffing bowls  
Brimmed from the fount that he is dreaming of."—  
So Beatrice besought; and those blithe souls  
Flasht out like comets streaming in the sky,  
Whirling in circles round determined poles.

*Cf. the com-  
parison at end  
of Canto x*

And even as wheels in clock escapement ply  
In such a fashion geared that motionless  
Appears the first one, and the last to fly,  
Likewise those wheeling carols let me guess,  
By variable measure of the dance  
Or swift or slow, their wealth of blessedness.  
The carol that seemed fairest to my glance  
Was flaming forth such plenitude of bliss  
That none was left of greater radiance,

*The fairest carol  
sweeps around  
Beatrice*

And swept three times encircling Beatrice  
Accompanied with singing so divine  
That fantasy in me falls short of this:  
I write it not, my pen must skip the line,  
For hues of fancy would too coarsely glare,  
Let alone words, on drapery so fine.  
"O holy sister, thy compelling prayer  
Devout, and with so fervent feeling made,  
Detaches me from yonder circle fair."—  
After the blessed fire its motion stayed,  
Did it directly to my Lady turn  
Breathing forth what I have already said.

And she replied to it: "O light eterne  
 Of the great peer to whom our Master gave  
 Keys he brought down of this delight supern,  
 Invite this man, on questions light or grave  
 As pleases thee, about the Faith to tell  
 Wherethrough thou once didst walk upon the wave.  
 If loves he, hopes he, and believes he well,  
 Is hidden not from thee who hast thine eye  
 Where all things seen as in a picture dwell.  
 But it becomes him thus to testify  
 For the true Faith, that it be glorified,  
 Seeing this Realm is citizened thereby."—  
 As arms the bachelor, whose tongue is tied  
 Until the Master doth the question stir,  
 To sanction it with proof, not to decide,  
 Even so did I, hearing these words from her,  
 Equip me all with answer in advance  
 In such a shrift to such examiner.  
 "Speak up, good Christian, give it utterance,  
 What thing is Faith?"—Whereat I raised my brow  
 Whither was breathing forth that radiance,  
 And then turned round to Beatrice, who now  
 Wafted prompt signals to me that I lift  
 The inward sluice gate and my creed avow.  
 "May Grace, which is vouchsafing to me shrift  
 In presence of the chief Centurion,"  
 Began I, "mold the expression of my drift.  
 Father, as wrote the truthful pen thereon  
 Of thy dear brother who set the feet of Rome  
 In the right path with thee, Faith's benison  
 Is substance of the things we hope will come,  
 And of invisible things the evidence:  
 Its essence such appears to me in sum."—  
 Then heard I: "Rightly dost thou catch the sense,  
 If comprehending why he classed it now  
 With substances and now with arguments."—

*The light of  
 St. Peter*

*Picture of an  
 examination  
 such as the  
 Poet had under-  
 gone at the  
 University*

*Definition of  
 Faith drawn  
 from St. Paul*

*Faith is the  
substance,—  
that which  
stands under  
and supports  
Hope*

And I thereon: "The deep things which allow  
That glimpses of themselves should here be shown  
Are so concealed from mortal eye below  
As to exist there in belief alone,  
Whereon our hope sits, founded high aloof,  
Whence Faith is by the name of substance known;  
From which belief is laid on us behoof  
To argue without seeing more than it,  
Wherefore it takes the notion on of proof."—

Then heard I: "If whatever men admit  
For doctrine were so understood on earth,  
No room would there remain for sophist wit."—  
This was from that enkindled Love breathed forth,  
Subjoining then: "Right well dost thou rehearse  
The carats of this coinage and the worth:  
But tell me if thou hast it in thy purse?"—  
And I: "That have I, both so bright and round  
That of its stamp to me no doubt occurs."—

*Faith based on  
Scripture*

Thereafter issued from the light profound  
Glowing above, this utterance thereto:  
"This precious gem, wherein all worth we found,  
Came to thee whence?"—And I: "The ample dew  
Of the Celestial Spirit, which is shed  
Over the Ancient Parchments and the New,  
Is argument that hath within me bred  
Belief so strong that, set against its force,  
All demonstration seems to me but dead."—

*Divine because  
attested by  
miracle*

I heard thereon: "The old and the new course  
Of argument with such conclusion fraught,  
Why dost thou hold it for divine discourse?"—

*"This is arguing  
in a circle,"  
objects the  
examiner*

And I: "The very proof is to be sought  
In th' after-works, whereto might never be  
Hot iron yet on Nature's anvil wrought."—  
"Who vouches, pray," it was replied to me,  
"That these works were performed?—Thou wouldst  
attest  
The very text affirming it to thee."—

"Though without miracles the world confest  
 Christianity, this were a hundredfold  
 More wonderful," I answered, "than the rest;  
 For poor and hungry once into the wold  
 Didst thou go forth to sow there the good plant,  
 A bramble now, which was a vine of old."—  
 The high and holy Court, then celebrant,  
 Made a "Praise God" throughout those circles ring  
 In such a melody as there they chant.  
 And that great Lord who, thus examining,  
 Had so far drawn me now from spray to spray  
 That near the topmost frondage poised our wing,  
 Resumed: "The Grace whose dalliance doth so play  
 Upon thy soul, thus far to conference  
 Hath opened thy lips duly; and I pay  
 My commendation to what issued thence;  
 But now to tell thine own belief is meet,  
 And why it captured thine intelligence."—  
 "O holy Father, soul with so complete  
 Discernment of thy faith, thou didst outfare,  
 Anigh the Sepulcher, more youthful feet,"—  
 Began I,—"thou wouldst have me here declare  
 The very essence of my prompt believing,  
 And also have the grounds of it laid bare.  
 And I reply: by faith am I receiving  
 One God, sole and eterne, the Heavens all  
 Who moves (Himself unmoved) by love and craving.  
 And for such faith have I proofs physical  
 And metaphysical, nor am denied  
 The verity that showers from here withal  
 Through Moses, Psalms, and prophecies, beside  
 The Evangel, and what you Apostles writ  
 When by the fiery Spirit sanctified.  
 In three Eternal Persons, and to wit  
 One Essence I believe, so 'One and Trine  
 That *are* and *is* the syntax must admit.

*The conversion  
 of the world  
 through the  
 agency of a few  
 humble men  
 would have  
 been more won-  
 derful than a  
 miracle*

*Dante's own  
 belief and its  
 grounds*

This, the mysterious state of the Divine,  
 Doth many a time the Gospel teaching leaven,  
 Which stamps upon my mind its seal and sign.  
 This is the focus whence the spark is driven  
 Which then doth into living flame dilate  
 And shine within me like a star in Heaven."—  
 Even as a lord who hears good tidings, straight  
 The story ended, presses to his breast  
 The servant whom he would congratulate,  
 So, by his singing rendering me blest,  
 Three times encircled me, when ceased my voice,  
 That apostolic Light at whose behest  
 I spoke: so did he in my words rejoice.

*The light of St.  
 Peter now en-  
 circles Dante as  
 it had first en-  
 circled Beatrice*



XXV

ST. JAMES EXAMINES THE POET CONCERNING HOPE

If ever it happen that the Sacred Song,  
Where to both Heaven and Earth have so set hand  
That it has made me lean for seasons long,  
Should foil the cruelty that keeps me banned  
From the fair sheepfold where, a lamb, I lay,  
Hated of wolves that harry all the land,  
With other voice, with other fleece, that day  
Returning Poet, will I from mine own  
Baptismal font accept the wreath of bay;  
There entered I the Faith that renders known  
The soul to God; and after, by her worth,  
Did Peter, as I said, my brow enzone.  
Then usward moved a radiance that took birth  
Out of that sphere whence issued the first Head  
Of those Christ left, his vicars here on earth.  
And my own Lady, full of rapture, said:  
"Look, look, behold the Baron for whose grace  
Galicia below is visited."—  
As, circling nearer to the nesting place  
And cooing to his mate, alights the dove,  
And both pour forth affection, in like case  
I saw one great and glorious Prince with love  
And welcome by that other grandeur greeted,  
Praising the food which feeds them thereabove.  
But when the gratulation was completed,  
Silent in front of me they both stopt short,  
Enkindled so, mine eyes fell down defeated.  
Then Beatrice smiled forth what I report:  
"Illustrious Life, who didst in bounty write  
The perfect gifts of our Imperial Court,  
Do thou make Hope resound upon this height,  
For thou dost hope as often typify  
As Jesus granted to the three most light."—

*These lines, too few, express the Poet's hopes deferred*

*Froissard also terms St. James a "Baron." He was believed to be buried at Santiago de Compostela, "The Jerusalem of the West"*

*Beatrice, smiling, addresses the light of St. James*

*Cheering words  
of the Apostle  
to the Poet*

"Be of good cheer and lift thy head on high,  
For all ascending here from mortal stress  
Must in our mellowing rays to ripen lie."—  
The Second Fire did with this comfort bless;  
Whence to the hills I raised mine eyes, before  
Bowed heavily by radiant excess.

"Since of his grace desires our Emperor  
That thou meet face to face before thy death  
His baronage within the secret door,  
That, seeing this Court truly, thou draw breath  
Till in thyself and others thou relume  
The Hope which well below enamoreth,—  
Tell what hope is, and how therewith abloom  
Thy spirit, and tell whence it came to thee:"  
So speaking, did the Second Light resume.  
And she who with compassionate sympathy  
To so high flight my fledgy wings beguiled,  
With answer thus anticipated me:

*Beatrice  
answers for  
Dante as to the  
second ques-  
tion, that he  
might not  
appear to boast*

"Church militant has not a single child  
Richer in hope, as read we in the fire  
Of that Sun which throughout our host has smiled;  
And hence it was vouchsafed to his desire  
To come from Egypt to Jerusalem  
To see, before the limit of his hire.  
The other two points,—since thou askest them  
Not for thy knowing, but that he report  
To men this virtue as thy dearest gem,—  
To him I leave; he will not find them thwart  
Nor matter of boast; let him reply thereto,  
Nor may the grace of God in him come short."—

*Definition of  
Hope*

I answered even as willing pupils do  
The Master, who are glad, when competent,  
That their proficiency be brought to view:  
"Hope is the expectation confident  
Of future glory, fountain that doth stream  
From Grace divine and merit that forewent.

Stars many cause this light on me to beam,  
 But who first made it through my bosom shine  
 Was supreme singer of the Guide Supreme.  
 So speaks he in his Psalmody divine:  
 'Hope they in Thee who know thy name,—' and who  
 Can know it not, having like faith with mine?  
 Thou then didst so bedew me with his dew  
 In thine Epistle that I am full, and pour  
 On others rain that showers from both of you."—  
 While thus I spoke, within that living core  
 Of fire there quivered forth a flash of light  
 Quick as chain lightning. Whereupon once more  
 It breathed: "The love wherewith I flame so bright  
 For that same Virtue still my comforter  
 Unto the palm and issue of the fight,  
 Again on thee whose joy abides in her  
 Moves me to breathe; and I would fain be told  
 What is it Hope gives promise to confer?"  
 And I: "The Scriptures, new as well as old,  
 Set forth the emblem whence I understand  
 The bliss of souls, God's friends, the double-stoled:  
 Isaiah promises that all shall stand  
 In their own land with double raiment on,—  
 And this sweet life is their own fatherland;  
 Far more distinctly does thy brother John,  
 Where he is treating of the robes of white,  
 Make manifest to us this benison."—  
 Now first, my words being ended, from the height  
 "Hope they in Thee" a voice was heard to say,  
 The carols all responding; then a light  
 Among them shot forth so intense a ray  
 That, if the Crab held one such diamond,  
 Winter would have a month of one sole day.  
 As winsome maiden rises with a bound  
 To go and join the dancing, honor due  
 Giving the bride, and from no motive fond,

*Dante first  
 drew it from  
 the Psalms;  
 next from the  
 Epistle of  
 James*

*If the Sign of  
 Cancer had a  
 star as bright  
 as the light of  
 St. John, the  
 winter night  
 would be abol-  
 ished*

So saw I drawing near the other two  
 The brightened splendor, where they wheeled along  
 As it became their burning love to do.  
 It mingled with their measure and their song;  
 And gazing on them did my Lady rest  
 Even as a bride unmoved and still of tongue.

*The pelican,  
 supposed to feed  
 her brood with  
 her own blood,  
 is an emblem  
 of Christ in  
 medieval art*

"This, this is he who lay upon the breast  
 Of our own Pelican; to him the award  
 Of the great trust was from the cross address."—  
 My Lady thus; not more was her regard  
 Moved to withdraw itself from its delight  
 Before these words of hers, or afterward.

*Compare  
 Dante's desire  
 to see the glori-  
 fied body of St.  
 Benedict, Canto  
 xxii*

Like one endeavoring to view aright  
 The eclipsing of the sun a little space,  
 Who through long gazing grows bereft of sight,  
 Such, by that latest fire, became my case,  
 While it was said: "Why dost thou dazzle thee  
 To see a thing that here can have no place?  
 My body is on earth, and there will be  
 With all the rest, until our number grow  
 Such as to tally with the eterne decree.  
 With the two robes in blessèd cloister glow  
 Only those two great Splendors who ascended;  
 Bear this report back to your world below."—  
 And at this voice the flaming whirl was ended,  
 And therewithal was brought to quiet close  
 The trinal breath harmoniously blended,  
 As when, avoiding risk, or for repose,  
 The oars, that smote till now upon the wave,  
 All pause together when a whistle blows.  
 Alas! how much the mind in me misgave  
 When I turned round to look on Beatrice,  
 At having no power to see her, although I clave  
 Close to her side, and in the world of bliss.

*The Poet can-  
 not see Beatrice*

XXVI

ST. JOHN EXAMINES HIM CONCERNING LOVE

While I was trembling for my sight, forspent  
By the effulgent flame, there issued thence  
A breathing voice that made my heed intent,  
Saying: "While thou recoverest the sense  
Of vision which thou hast burnt out on me,  
Let conversation serve for recompense.  
Begin then, and declare where centered be  
Thy heart's desires; and let assurance stand  
That dazzled and not dead is sight in thee,  
Because the eyes of the Lady, through this land  
Divine conducting thee, irradiate  
The power that was in Ananias' hand."—  
I said: "To these mine eyes, which were her gate  
To enter with fire that ever burns me so,  
Let balm come at her pleasure, soon or late.  
The Good whereto these courts contentment owe  
Is Alpha and Omega of the scroll  
That Love is reading me, or loud or low."—  
The selfsame voice, first lifted to control  
My fear when dazzled suddenly, to large  
Discourse of reason called again my soul:  
"Nay, but thy sieve more finely must discharge,"  
So it resumed, "and needs must thou reply,  
Who aimed thy arrows at so high a target?"—  
"By teachings of Philosophy," said I,  
"And by authority descending hence  
I bear perforce the print of love so high,  
For Good, as such, when brought in evidence,  
Makes love flow forth to it in fuller stream  
As it embraces more of excellence.  
Hence to the Essence which is so supreme  
That every good outside it to be traced  
Is but an emanation from its beam,

*St. John  
assures the  
Poet that  
Beatrice will  
do for him what  
Ananias did  
for Paul*

*Primal good  
necessarily en-  
kindles Love*

*Aristotle taught  
that the world  
is moved by the  
desire of all  
things for God*

More than to any other needs must haste  
 In love the soul of every one not blind  
 To truth whereon this argument is based.  
 This truth has been unfolded to my mind  
 By him who demonstrates to me what drew  
 The primal love of all the eternal kind.

It is unfolded by the Author true  
 To Moses, speaking of His proper worth:  
 'All goodness will I set before thy view.'

"omne bonum,"  
 "all good," in  
 the Vulgate

Thou too unfoldest it at setting forth  
 To cry Heaven's secret in that herald word,  
 The loftiest of all heralding to earth."—

The Apocalypse

"By human understanding," then I heard,  
 "In concord with authoritative writing,  
 Thy sovran love is looking Heavenward.

But further, if thou feelest other plighting  
 That draws thee Godward, by thy words attest  
 With just how many teeth this love is biting."—

The homely  
 words "teeth,"  
 "biting," are in  
 accordance with  
 the Poet's pro-  
 posed intention  
 to write in  
 everyday lan-  
 guage such as  
 even mere  
 women of the  
 people use  
 (mulierculæ)

Not hidden from me was the purpose blest  
 Of the Eagle of Christ; nay, whither he would guide  
 My declaration became manifest.

"All of those bitings," therefore I replied,  
 "Of force to turn the heart to God alone,  
 Combine to make such love in me abide:

Because the world's existence and mine own,  
 His death that I might live forevermore,  
 And what I hope with every faithful one,

As well as the aforesaid living lore,  
 Drew me from love perverse wherein I drowned,  
 And of right love have set me on the shore.

My love for blooms embowering the ground  
 Of the eternal Gardener, is strong  
 In measure as His gifts in them abound."—

Soon as I paused, a strain of sweetest song  
 Rang through the Heaven, and my Lady said,  
 "O Holy, Holy, Holy!" with the throng.

As slumber breaks when vivid light is shed,  
 So runs the spirit of sight to meet the burning  
 Splendor, through tunic after tunic sped  
 Until the waker flinch,—for undiscerning  
 Is consciousness before the sudden day  
 Till judgment to his succor is returning,—  
 Thus from mine eyes drove Beatrice away  
 All motes with luster of her own so bright  
 That myriads of miles was shed the ray;  
 Whence better than beforehand was my sight:  
 And I made question like one in a maze,  
 Perceiving there before us a Fourth Light.  
 My Lady answered: "Shrouded in those rays  
 The first soul that was made by Virtue Prime  
 On his Creator doth in rapture gaze."—  
 Even as the treetop bows from time to time  
 Beneath the passing breeze, then rises slow  
 To place again through native power to climb,  
 While she was speaking did I waver so,  
 And then grew confident, though struck with awe,  
 Such will to question set me all aglow.  
 And I began: "O fruit that ripe, not raw,  
 Alone hast been produced, O Father of yore  
 To whom each bride is daughter and daughter-in-law,  
 Devoutly as I may do I implore  
 Thy speech with me; thou seest that I have stayed  
 My utterance to speed thy speaking more."—  
 Sometimes a covered animal is swayed  
 So that its feeling necessarily  
 Is by its undulating wrap betrayed;  
 And so the primal soul gave me to see,  
 Transpiring through his screen of radiance,  
 How blithesome he became to pleasure me.  
 Then he breathed forth: "Without thine utterance  
 Can I more readily detect thy yearning,  
 Than canst thou any surest circumstance,

*The return of  
 the Poet's eye-  
 sight scientifi-  
 cally described,  
 as science was  
 then understood*

*The light of the  
 first created  
 human soul*

*How the Poet  
 detected the  
 joy of Adam*

*Dante's four questions, historical, theological, philosophical*

*The third question is first answered: because our First Parents wished to be "as gods, knowing good and evil" (So the Vulgate)*

*Adam states that he remained in Paradise but seven hours! This was tradition*

Because in the True Mirror this discerning,  
Which forms of all things images sublime,  
And naught such mirror unto Him is turning.

Thou wouldest know what ages since the time  
God placed me in the lofty Paradise,  
Where taught thy Lady so long stair to climb,  
And how long it was pleasant to mine eyes,  
And the true reason of the scorn divine,  
And the idiom I used and did devise.

Now, not the tasted tree, O son of mine,  
Was solely cause of so great banishment,  
But only overstepping of the line.

Down there, whence by thy Lady Virgil went,  
Four thousand and three hundred circles and two  
Of sun, I yearned for this high Parliament;

And on the solar pathway to my view  
Nine hundred times the lights all reawoke,  
And fifty, and still breath on earth I drew.

Long silent were the accents that I spoke  
Before the work not to be consummated  
Was undertaken first by Nimrod's folk;

For never aught by reason fabricated  
Endured, because of human choice renewing  
As heavenly influences operated.

The use of speech by man is nature's doing;  
But nature lets you shape it thus or so  
As suits the fashion you may be pursuing.

Before I sank down to the Eternal Woe,  
Men gave the name of 'Jah' to the Chief Good  
Whence comes the rapture round me all aglow;

Then called Him 'El' as fitted to their mood;  
For mortal fashions are like leaves that cling  
To branch, and fall in swift vicissitude.

The Mount above the wave most towering  
Held me, with life first pure, and then undone,  
From the first hour to that next following

The sixth, at altered quadrant of the sun."—



## XXVII

ASCENT TO THE CRYSTALLINE HEAVEN: A SPLENDID  
VISION, SET BETWEEN TWO REBUKES TO MEN

"To Father, Son, and to the Holy Ghost

Glory," began with sweetness exquisite

Intoxicating me, the Heavenly Host.

Seemed what I witnessed with so deep delight

A laughter of the Universe; for this

Elation entered through both ear and sight.

O Joy supreme! O inexpressive bliss!

O life of love and peace in ample store!

O wealth secure exempt from avarice!

Above my enraptured eyes the torches four

Stood kindled, and the one that first had come

Began to grow more vivid than before,

And to take on such look as might assume

Bright Jupiter were he and ruddy Mars

Transformed to birds, with interchange of plume.

*The light of  
St. Peter  
grows ruddy*

The Providence allotting to the stars

Of heaven their function and their office due,

Had stilled the quiring of the blessed cars,

When I heard say: "If I transform my hue,

Marvel not, for behold incarnadine

While yet I speak will grow the others too!

He who on earth usurps that place of mine,

That place of mine, that place which now doth lie

Vacant in presence of the Son Divine,

*St. Peter de-  
nounces Pope  
Boniface as an  
usurper*

Has turned my sepulcher into a sty

Of blood and filth, so that the Evil One

Who fell from here is comforted thereby."—

With such a crimson as the adverse sun

Paints on the cloud at morn or eventide,

Did I behold all heaven suffused thereon.

And as a modest lady doth abide

Sure of herself, but through another's shame

At the mere hearing becomes mortified,

So Beatrice changed semblance; and I deem  
     That such eclipse took place in Heaven perchance  
     When suffered the Omnipotence Supreme.  
 Thereon proceeded forth his utterance  
     With voice so greatly altered that behold!  
     Was not more changed his very countenance:  
 "The Bride of Christ was nurtured not of old  
     On blood of mine and that of Linus good  
     And Cletus, to be used for acquist of gold;  
 But for acquist of this beatitude  
     Did Sixtus, Pius, and Calixtus weep,  
     And Urban, and thereafter shed their blood.  
 Nor purposed we the Christian folk to keep  
     To right and left of our successors,—these  
     Stigmatized goats, the others favored sheep;  
 Nor were confided to my hand the Keys  
     To be an emblem on a banneret  
     For war on the baptized; nor do I please  
 To figure as a signet that is set  
     On privileges venal and untrue,  
     Whereat my frequent blush is burning yet.  
 From here aloft in all the folds a crew  
     Of ravening wolves in shepherd garb is seen:  
     Vengeance of God, why dost thou lie perdue?  
 To drink our blood Gascon and Cahorsine  
     Are making ready. Alas, must needs the end  
     Of fair beginning be indeed so mean?  
 But lofty Providence that once did fend  
     Rome's empire of the world with Scipio,  
     Will quickly here, I deem, some succor lend.  
 And thou who must return once more below  
     Through mortal load, open thy mouth, my son,—  
     Fail not to say what I fail not to show."—  
 As when our atmosphere is snowing down  
     In flakes the frozen vapors, when the horn  
     Of the Sky-goat is gilded by the sun,

*The same  
 "dread voice"  
 that speaks in  
 Milton's  
 "Lycidas"*

*Clement V was  
 a Gascon; John  
 XXII from  
 Cahors*

*As Cacciaguida  
 had done (Can-  
 to xvi, final  
 lines), so Peter  
 commands the  
 Poet to speak*

Such swarming flakes in triumph upward borne  
 Seemed those who with us there had sojourn made,  
 And now awhile the ethereal sky adorn.  
 My sight was following what their wraiths displayed,  
 And followed till the vastness manifold  
 All power of penetrating farther stayed.  
 Whereon my Lady, seeing me withhold  
 From gazing up, commanded me: "Now cast  
 Thine eye down at the distance thou hast rolled."—  
 I saw that, so revolving, I had passed  
 From the first hour I lookt, the whole arc through  
 Which the first climate makes from midst to last,  
 Hence could the wild course of Ulysses view  
 Past Cadiz, and well-nigh the hither shore  
 Whereon Europa so dear burden grew.  
 And further surface of this threshing floor  
 Had been uncovered, but the sun sped, turning .  
 Beneath my feet, removed a Sign and more.  
 Now my enamored spirit always yearning  
 After my Lady, to bring back and sate  
 Mine eyes on her, was more than ever burning.  
 All Nature ever made, or art, of bait  
 To catch the eye and captivate the thought  
 In human flesh real or delineate,  
 This, though united, would appear as naught  
 To the diviner beauty piercing through me  
 When now her smiling face I turned and sought.  
 The power wherewith I felt that look endue me.  
 From the fair nest of Leda tore me away  
 And to the fleetest heaven of all updrew me.  
 So uniform its parts I cannot say  
 Which one had Beatrice chosen for my place,—  
 Full of exceeding life and lofty they.  
 Then she, who saw my longing, of her grace  
 Began with smile of so blithe innocence  
 That God appeared rejoicing in her face:

*An upward fall  
 of snow*

*Dante had re-  
 volved with the  
 Twins through  
 90° of the "first  
 climate," and  
 could now see  
 that portion of  
 the earth from  
 the Eastern  
 Mediterranean  
 to where  
 Ulysses voyaged  
 the Atlantic  
 (Inf. xxvi). Cf.  
 the close of  
 Canto xxii*

*The nest of  
 Leda by  
 metonymy for  
 the Twins, Cas-  
 tor and Pollux*

*The Crystalline  
Heaven, "that  
first moved"*

"The nature of the World which holds suspense  
The center and makes all else around it fare,  
Doth here as from its starting point commence.  
And in this Heaven there is no other Where  
Than in the Mind Divine, wherein both move  
The Love that turns and Power that sheds the sphere.  
Engird it with one cincture light and love,  
As it engirds the others; He alone  
Who girdles it is governor thereof.  
No other measures motion all its own,  
But by this mete are measured all the rest,  
As ten by its half and by its fifth is shown.

*Here are the  
roots of Time*

And how in such a vessel Time can nest  
Its roots, its foliage in the others grow,  
Henceforward may to thee be manifest.  
O Greed, who overwhelmest mortals so  
Beneath thyself that none has masterdom  
To lift his eyes again from out thy flow!  
Will does indeed in men to blossom come;  
However long-continued rain and reek  
Convert to blighted fruit the perfect plum.  
Only in little children are to seek  
True faith and innocence; then both too soon  
Vanish before the down is on the cheek.  
Many keep fast while yet they babble and croon,  
Who swallow, when the tongue is free to play,  
Whatever food under whatever moon;  
And many while they babble love and obey  
Their mother, who when they can speak aright  
Long for the dawning of her burial day.

*The daughter is  
the human  
race. The Sun  
is the father of  
mortal life  
(Canto xxii,  
116)*

Even so the skin grows swarthy, which was white  
At the first aspect, of the daughter fair  
Of him who ushers morning and leaves night.  
But lest thou shouldst as at a marvel stare,  
Consider none on earth is governor,  
Whence human household strays from thoroughfare.

But before January be no more  
In winter, by the hundredth part neglected  
Down there, so shall these upper circles roar  
That Fortune, who has been so long expected,  
Shall whirl the stern about where lies the boom,  
So that the fleet will run the course directed;  
And perfect fruit will follow on the bloom."—

*Roughly estimated, the error in the calendar amounted to a hundredth of a day every year*

## XXVIII

## THE HEAVENLY INTELLIGENCES

When she who doth imparadise my mind  
 Had ended the veracious charge she brought  
 Against the life of wretched humankind,—  
 As one whose eye has in a mirror caught  
 The image of a torch behind him, long  
 Before he has it or in sight or thought,  
 And turns to verify if right or wrong  
 The mirror speak, and finds it to agree  
 With truth, as chimes the meter with the song,—  
 So did I, as I call to memory,  
 On looking in those eyes with beauty burning  
 Wherewith Love made the noose for snaring me.  
 And, as I shifted round my look, discerning  
 The contents of that volume, read aright  
 With eye that is intent upon its turning,  
 I saw a Point which radiated light  
 So piercing that the vision, fired thereby,  
 Is closed perforce by vividness so bright.  
 That star appearing smallest to our eye  
 Would seem a moon beside its light intense,  
 As star is matcht with star along our sky.  
 Perchance in distance equal to that whence  
 Halo engirds the light that has impearled  
 Its color when the vapor is most dense,  
 So distant round the Point a circle whirled  
 Of fire so swift its motion had outpaced  
 That which goes quickest around the world;  
 Round this another circle swept in haste,  
 Round that a third, a fourth the third enwound,  
 The fourth a fifth, and that a sixth embraced;  
 The seventh came afterward so wide of bound  
 That Juno's herald, though complete, would run  
 Too narrow to engirdle it around;

*He first catches  
 this revelation  
 from the eyes of  
 Beatrice*

*A Spaceless  
 Point of sur-  
 passing bril-  
 liance*

*The nine orders  
 of Angels*

*Though the  
 rainbow were a  
 complete circle*

Likewise the eighth and ninth; and slower on  
 Did each one move according as accrued  
 Its number farther from the point of One;  
 And shone that flame with clearest plenitude  
 From the Pure Spark at shortest interval,  
 I think because more with its truth imbued.  
 Perceiving me become the anxious thrall  
 Of dubitance, my Lady spoke this word:  
 "From that one Point hang Heaven and nature all.  
 Look at that circle which doth next engird  
 The Point, and know it has such eager haste  
 For the enkindled love whereby 'tis spurred."—  
 But I made question: "If the world were based  
 Upon the order yonder wheels disclose,  
 Enough were what has been before me placed;  
 But in the world of sense one sees and knows  
 The orbits to be ever more divine  
 The more their distance from the center grows.  
 Whence wouldst thou still the longing that is mine,  
 Within the wonderful angelic Fane  
 Which light and love and these alone confine,  
 I need to hear thee furthermore explain  
 Why copy is not here with pattern vying,  
 Since I unaided gaze thereon in vain."—  
 "Suffice not thy own fingers for untying  
 Such knot, there is no wonder, seeing it  
 So tangled has become for want of trying."—  
 My Lady thus; and then: "Take what seems fit  
 For me to tell, wouldst thou be satisfied,  
 And going round it sharpen thou thy wit.—  
 The spheres corporeal are strait or wide  
 According to the virtue less or more  
 Which throughout all their regions is supplied.  
 Superior good wills weal superior,  
 And if like perfect organs it dispose,  
 Holds larger body weal in larger store.

*The Poet's scientific notion of space (and therefore of time) seems here upset and reversed*

*Apparently the sensible universe reverses the pattern*

*The larger corporeal circles are more excellent; in the world now suddenly revealed the order is reversed, so that*

*the sphere "that  
first moved"  
corresponds to  
the smallest  
circle of intelli-  
gences*

Therefore this sphere which carries as it goes  
All the universe beside, must correspond  
To that small circle which most loves and knows.  
Hence if thou seek to measure with thy wand,  
Not the appearance, but the excellence  
Of substances to thy discerning round,  
Of more with greater wondrous congruence,  
As of the less with lesser wilt thou seek  
In every Heaven, with its Intelligence."—

*Referring to  
pictures of the  
winds on old  
maps (cf.  
Shakespeare:  
"Blow winds  
and crack your  
cheeks")*

Then as remains serene and cleared of reek  
The hemisphere of air, soon as the blast  
Is puffed by Boreas from the gentler cheek,  
Whereby the cloudy rack that overcast  
The welkin is dissolving, and the blue  
Of Heaven in all its beauty smiles at last,  
So cleared was I of all confusion through  
The lucid answer that my Lady made,  
And like a star in Heaven appeared the true.  
Thereon, when her discourse to me was stayed,  
As iron rays forth sparkles under stress  
Of fire, such sparkles now the circles rayed.

*The squares of  
the board re-  
duplicated by  
arithmetical  
progression*

Each spark did with their blazing coalesce,  
And running into thousands manifold  
More than the duplication of the chess.  
From quire to quire I heard Hosannah rolled  
To the fixed Point which holds them to the *Where*  
From evermore, and will forever hold.  
And she, of my perplexity aware,  
Said: "The first gyres enlighten thee concerning  
The Seraphim and Cherubim, who fare  
After their bonds so swiftly, because yearning  
To grow as like the Point as most they may,—  
And so they may, exalting their discerning.  
Those other loves that whirling round them play  
Are Thrones, wherein God's grace is manifest,  
For that the primal triad ended they.



And thou must know that one and all are blest  
According as they penetrate the true,  
Wherein all understanding is at rest.

Herein perceive we how the act of view  
Is source wherefrom beatitude draws being,  
Not act of love thereafter to ensue;

And merit is the measure of this seeing,—  
Merit begot by Grace and right endeavor:  
Such are the steps progressively agreeing.

The second triad, burgeoning forever  
To flower in this sempiternal spring  
Which the nocturnal Ram doth ravage never,  
Is here perpetually caroling

Hosannah, sounded with three melodies  
Whence orders three with trinal rapture ring.

This priesthood musters three divinities:  
The Dominations first, the Virtues then,  
And third the order of the Potencies.

Next, all but ultimate, in dances twain,  
Are Princedoms and Archangels wheeling on;  
Rejoicing Angels last in sportive train.

Upward are gazing all these orders yon, 127  
And down prevail so that to the divine 128  
They all are drawing as they all are drawn. 129

Such zeal to contemplate these orders nine  
Showed Dionysius, that coincided  
His definitions and his names with mine.

Thereafter Gregory from him divided;  
Wherefore that saint, first opening his eye  
Within this Heaven, himself with smiles derided.

And that on earth a mortal might descry  
Such inward truth, need not astonish you,  
Since learned from him who saw it here on high,  
With much more of these circles that is true.”—

*Love flows  
from knowledge*

*The constellation  
Aries ap-  
pears in our  
sky at the time  
of the falling  
leaf*

*Dionysius  
learned the  
truth from St.  
Paul*

## XXIX

## CREATION AND NATURE OF HEAVENLY INTELLIGENCE

*The setting sun  
and the rising  
full moon at the  
Equinox,—the  
one under the  
Ram, the other  
under the scales  
(Libra)*

When, by the Ram and by the scales o'erbrooded,  
The twinborn children of Latona fair  
In one horizon girdle are included,  
Long as the zenith balances them there  
Until both swerve from that circumference  
Unbalancing and shifting hemisphere,  
So long, with smiles lighting her countenance,  
Paused Beatrice, centering her ken  
Upon the Point that had subdued my glance.  
"I tell and do not ask," began she then,  
"What thou wouldst hear; by vision I assist  
Where centers every Where and every When.

*Why the Angels  
were created*

Not to possess Himself of good acquit,  
Which cannot be, but in the splendor of  
His glorious declaration, 'I Exist,'

*Outside time  
and space*

Beyond all limits, and all time above,  
As pleased Him, in His own eternity,  
Unfolded in new loves the Eternal Love.  
Nor yet before as if inert lay He,  
Since nor before nor after moved the flow  
Of spirit divine to brood upon this sea.

*Pure form or  
act is identified  
with intelligence  
(Angels); matter  
is the pure  
potency, passive  
in character; the  
combination of  
form and matter  
is found in cre-  
ated things, es-  
pecially in man*

Matter and form, combined and simple, so  
Came into being flawless and unblighted,  
Like arrows three from triple-corded bow;  
And as glass, amber, crystal may be lighted  
So that between the earliest radiation  
And full effulgence all remains united,  
Even so the Father's threefold operation  
All at a flash its being consummated  
Without an interval in the creation.  
Order was constituted and created  
In substances; and the world's crowning grace  
Were these, wherein pure act was generated.

Pure potency retained the lowest place;  
 Midway did act and potence interweave  
 Such withies as can never disenlace.  
 Jerome wrote to you that we must believe  
 The angels to have been created ages  
 Before the other world; thou mayst perceive,  
 However, if thou but peruse the sages  
 Through whom the Spirit spoke in Holy Writ,  
 The very truth displayed on many pages;  
 And also reason gets a glimpse of it,  
 Which that Prime Movers for so long could be  
 Without their perfect work, could not admit.  
 Now where these loves were formed is known to thee,  
 And when and how; and in thy longing hence  
 Already are extinguisht ardors three.  
 Ere they reach twenty who to count commence,  
 So quickly of the angel host a part  
 Disturbed the lowest of your elements.  
 The rest, who stayed, began to ply this art  
 Which thou beholdest,—so beatified  
 That never from their circling they depart.  
 The Fall originated in the pride  
 Accursèd of that One whom thou hast seen  
 Crushed by the weights of all the world beside.  
 Those whom thou seëst here have humble been  
 To acknowledge them as from that Goodness kind  
 Which made them apt for knowledge so serene;  
 Wherefore illuminative Grace combined  
 With their own merit to exalt their view  
 So that they have a full and steadfast mind.  
 I would not have thee doubt, but hold it true  
 That grace accepted thus is merited  
 By laying open the longing heart thereto.  
 Henceforth, so have my words been harvested,  
 Canst round this Sacred College take thy fill  
 Of contemplation without further aid.

*These substances  
at the top of crea-  
tion are the  
Angels, which  
are pure act or  
form (i.e., in-  
telligence).  
This interbraid-  
ing of spirit and  
matter cannot  
be severed by  
death*

*The Angels,  
movers of the  
spheres, could  
not be con-  
ceived as inac-  
tive*

*The rebellious  
angels fell to  
earth before one  
could count  
twenty*

*Cf. Inf. xxvii, 3*

*Memory cannot  
be predicated of  
beings outside  
of time and  
space, who  
never forget*

But since on earth your schools attribute still  
To the angelic nature, memory  
Together with intelligence and will,  
I will speak further to make clear to thee  
The truth, confused by men below who indite  
Prelections fraught with ambiguity.  
These substances, since first they drew delight  
From God's own face, wherefrom is hidden naught,  
Have never turned away from it their sight;

*They do not  
"look before and  
after and sigh  
for what is not"*

Whence they have vision intercepted not  
By concept new, and need not undertake  
To call back memory through divided thought.

So men down there are dreaming, wide awake,  
Weening, or weening not, truth to declare;  
But in the one more guilt and shame partake.

*The stormy  
voice again*

Below ye travel not one thoroughfare  
Philosophizing; so far does the love  
Of show delude you, and its specious air.

Yet even enduring this, the Heavens above  
Are less indignant, than when set aside  
Is Holy Writ or idly prated of.

What blood was spent to sow it far and wide  
Is given no heed, nor how their prayer is heard  
Who in humility by it abide.

Each is agog to shine, and ply absurd  
Inventions, and these form the staple theme  
Of preachers,—of the Gospel not a word!

During Christ's passion, some would have us deem  
The moon turned back again and canceled through  
The intercepted sunlight; and some dream

That of its own accord the light withdrew,  
And hence would this eclipse alike appear  
To Spaniard and to Indian, as to Jew.

*Common nick-  
names in Flor-  
ence: "Lapo"  
corresponds to  
"Jake" (Jacopo)  
(cf. xiii, 139)*

So many a Lapo and Bindo every year  
Breeds Florence not, as fables of this kind  
Are bawled out from the pulpit, far and near;

So that from pasture, flatulent with wind,  
 The silly sheep flock, witless of salvation;  
 Yet is it no excuse that they are blind.  
 Christ did not say to his first congregation:  
 'Preach to the world with idle utterance,'  
 But laid for their behoof the true foundation;  
 And that had from their lips such resonance,  
 That, to enkindle faith, their battle quest,  
 The Gospel formed their buckler and their lance.  
 Now preachers sally forth to break a jest,  
 Buffoons who, so they may provoke a grin,  
 Puff out their cowls and reck not of the rest;  
 But could the people see what bird of sin  
 Is nestling in the hood-tail, they would guess  
 What kind of pardon they are trusting in;  
 Whence in the world so waxes foolishness  
 That, seeking not approval of any sign,  
 Men jump at promise of indulgences.  
 Hereby St. Anthony makes fat his swine,  
 And others also, far more swine than they,  
 Paying their scot with counterfeited coin.  
 But since we have gone very far astray,  
 Let us look back to the straight thoroughfare,  
 So with the time to shorten up the way.  
 The angelic nature runs up such a stair  
 Of number, scaling so remote a height,  
 Never could tongue or thought pursue it there.  
 And Daniel's revelation, read aright,  
 Shows, in the thousands he enumerates,  
 That definite number is withheld from sight.  
 The Primal Light, which all irradiates,  
 By modes as many is received in these  
 As are the splendors whereunto it mates.  
 And since love follows on the act that sees,  
 Therefore the sweetness of their love is spoken,  
 More or less fervent in diverse degrees.

*St. Anthony  
 puts the hog  
 under his feet  
 as a symbol;  
 his monks now  
 degenerate to  
 the hog*

*Number of the  
 angels countless*

Let this the height henceforth, and breadth betoken  
Of Worth Eternal, fashioning great store  
Of mirrors whereupon its light is broken,  
One in Itself remaining as before."—

XXX

THE CELESTIAL ROSE

When, eastward ho! six thousand miles perchance  
Noon blazes, and toward the level bed  
The shadow of this world already slants,  
The deep of central heaven above our head  
Grows so suffused that here a star and yon  
Begins to pale the radiance it shed,  
And, as the brightest handmaid of the sun  
Advances, so are quencht the heavenly graces  
Star after star, even to the fairest one.  
Not else the Triumph that forever races  
Around the Point which overcame me quite,  
Seeming embraced by that which it embraces,  
Was imperceptibly immersed in light;  
Whereat to turn mine eyes on Beatrice,  
Love laid constraint on me, and lack of sight.  
Could what is said of her as far as this  
All in one single act of praise conclude,  
It would but serve the present turn amiss.  
The beauty that I saw doth so elude  
Our measure, that its Maker, I surely deem,  
Alone can taste its full beatitude.  
I yield me vanquisht at this pass supreme;  
Comic or tragic poet overborne  
Was never thus by crisis of his theme.  
For, as to dazzled sight the sun of morn,  
So doth her sweet remembered smile erase  
My memory, of its very self forlorn.  
From the first day when I beheld her face  
In this life, even until the present viewing,  
My song yet never faltered on her trace;  
But now I must give over from pursuing  
Her beauty in these cadences of mine,  
Like every artist taskt beyond his doing.

*When it is noon  
90° or more  
eastward, the  
sun is about to  
rise here, and  
Aurora, the  
dawn, is put-  
ting out "night's  
candles"*

*At the ascent to  
the Empyrean  
the smile of  
Beatrice be-  
comes supremely  
sweet*

Such as I leave her to a more divine  
 Renown than any that my trumpet grants,—  
 Which now concludes its arduous design,—

She said, with leader's voice and vigilance:

"Quitting the widest sphere of the concrete  
 We reach the heaven that is pure radiance:

Radiance of intellect with love replete,  
 Love of true good replete with ecstasy,  
 Ecstasy far exceeding every sweet.

*The Host of  
 the Angels and  
 that of the  
 Redeemed*

Here both the one and the other soldiery  
 Of Paradise, and one host of the two  
 Robed as at Final Judgment, shalt thou see."—

As when a sudden lightning routs the crew  
 Of visual spirits, putting them to flight  
 So that the clearest things are canceled through,

So beamed there all about me living light,  
 Leaving so thick a veil around me closing,  
 That I saw nothing for that glory bright.

"The Love wherein this heaven is aye reposing  
 Is wonted so to welcome those who come,  
 Duly the taper for its flame disposing."—

No sooner had this brief exordium  
 Within me penetrated, than I knew  
 Myself upraised beyond my masterdom;  
 And I rekindled with new power of view  
 Such that no light could be so unalloyed  
 But that mine eyes were tempered thereunto.

And I saw light in river-form with tide  
 Of fulgent fire between two margins streaming,  
 Which wondrously with flowers of spring were dyed.

Out of that current living sparks were teeming  
 And flashing from the flowers with hues intense  
 Like very rubies from gold patines gleaming.

Thereon, appearing drunken with the scents,  
 They plunged again into the wondrous eddy,  
 And as one sank another issued thence.



"The lofty wish aflame in thee already  
 For knowledge of this vision, in like wise  
 Extends my joy as its increase is steady;  
 But thou must of this water of Paradise  
 Drink deep, to slake a thirst that so consumes."—  
 Thus spoke to me the sunshine of mine eyes,  
 Adding: "The river and the smiling blooms,  
 The plunging and emerging jewels bright,  
 Are types of truth that in their shadow looms;  
 Not that these things are hard to see aright,  
 But on thy part there is inaptitude  
 Since not yet so exalted is thy sight."—  
 There is no child far later than it should  
 Awakening, with face toward the breast  
 That plunges with more hunger-stricken mood,  
 Than did I, that mine eyes might mirror best  
 That vision, bending me my fill to take  
 Out of that flood which pours to make us blest.  
 No sooner had I felt its ripple slake  
 Mine eyelids, than both margins seemed to yield  
 From long to large and rounded to a lake.  
 Then, even as masqueraders are revealed  
 Quite other than beforehand, letting fall  
 The alien guise wherein they were concealed,  
 So changed for me to ampler festival  
 The flowerets and the flashes, till I saw  
 Clearly the two Courts of the heavenly Hall.  
 O splendor of very God, whereby I saw  
 The Kingdom true in triumph high, increase  
 In me the power to tell it as I saw!  
 A light up yonder shows without surcease  
 The Maker to that creature, who alone  
 In seeing Him inherits its own peace;  
 And this light broadens in a circling zone  
 So far and wide that its circumference  
 Would be too large a girdle for the sun.

*The stream of  
 grace, the  
 flowers, and the  
 ruby-sparks are  
 but symbols*

*Dante's sight  
 exalted to see the  
 reality behind  
 these symbols*

*The identical  
 triple rime upon  
 "saw" has the  
 same solemnity  
 as that upon  
 "Christ." Cf.  
 Hugh Capet's  
 discourse, *Purg.*  
*xx, 65-69**

*Striking upon  
the outermost  
surface of the  
Universe, it  
gives motion to  
all the spheres*

Its semblance, all of radiant effluence,  
Doth to the top of Primal Motion pass,  
Which takes vitality and vigor thence.  
And as a hillside makes a looking-glass  
Of water at its foot, as if discerning  
How fair and rich it is in flowers and grass,  
So mirrored, round and round above the burning  
On myriads of thrones, beheld I those  
Of us who there above have won returning.  
And if the lowermost degrees inclose  
Luster so large, what amplitude of light  
Spread in the outer petals of the Rose!  
My vision in the vastness and the height  
Strayed not, at home and fully conversant  
With essence and with scope of that delight.  
There near and far do neither add nor scant,  
For where God is directly governing  
The law of nature is not relevant.  
Into the yellow Rose unwithering,  
Whose petals are unfurled with fragrance cast  
Of praise unto the Sun of dateless spring,  
Like one long silent, moved to speak at last,  
Did Beatrice conduct me, saying: "View  
The Congregation of white robes, how vast!  
Look the wide circuit of our city through!  
Look at our benches which are so replete  
That here henceforward are expected few!  
There where thine eyes are drawn to that great Seat  
By the already overhanging crown,  
Ere thou shalt at this wedding supper eat,  
The soul of noble Henry shall sit down,  
Who comes, august, to render straight the way  
For Italy, ere she be ready grown.  
Blind Greed, who doth her spell upon you lay,  
Has made you like the child who, though he pine  
With famine, pushes yet the nurse away.

*The last words  
of Beatrice*

Then shall be Pontiff in the Court Divine  
One such that open word and covert deed  
Walk not on equal feet to one design.  
But little while will God permit him speed  
In Holy Office, for he shall be thrust  
With Simon Magus, and make, by way of meed,  
Him of Alagna bite the baser dust."—

*Clement V,  
who secretly  
opposed Henry  
VII while pre-  
tending to favor.  
He of Alagna is  
Boniface VIII.  
The best com-  
mentary is  
Inferno xix*

## XXXI

BEATRICE, ASSUMED INTO THE CELESTIAL ROSE, SENDS  
ST. BERNARD TO DANTE

In fashion therefore of a pure white Rose  
Unfolded to my view the sacred throng  
Whom Christ in His own blood espoused. But those  
Who witness as they fly, and tell in song  
The glory of Him who makes them love, and sing  
His excellence who made them fair and strong,—

*The comparison  
with the bee  
was merely sug-  
gested in Canto  
xxx*

Even as a busy swarm of bees a-wing  
That merge in flowers awhile, then speed away  
To where their labor sweet is savoring,—  
Plunged into the Great Flower, with fair array  
Of Petals, and were reascending thence  
Where sojourns their own Love for ever and aye.  
Their features were alive with flame intense,  
Golden their wings, the rest so white that banks  
Of drifted snow have not their innocence.  
Alighting on the Flower, to ranks on ranks  
They proffered of the ardor and repose  
Which they had won by winnowing their flanks.  
Nor did the coming in, between the Rose  
And That Which dwelt above, of flight so great  
Obstruct the vision; still the splendor glows,  
For through the universe doth penetrate  
In measure of its worth the Light Divine  
So that no bar can ever separate.  
This safe and happy City, where combine  
Both ancient folk and modern crowded so,  
Had look and love all turned toward one sign.  
O Trinal Light, that in one Star doth glow  
Upon their vision with such benison,  
Look down upon our tempest here below!  
If the barbarians from out that zone  
Where spreads forever Helicë her span  
Revolving with her well-belovèd son,—

*Helicë was  
turned into the  
Great Bear (the  
Wain or Dip-  
per), her son  
into Boötes*

If, entering Rome, her mighty works to scan,  
 These stared in wonder, in that era when  
 Transcended mortal things the Lateran,—  
 I, who to the Divine had come from men,  
 From time unto eternity had come,  
 From Florence to a people just and sane,  
 With what amazement was I overcome!  
 Truly the wonder and the joy between,  
 'Twas rapture to hear nothing and stand dumb.  
 And as the wayworn pilgrim grows serene  
 Gazing around the temple of his vow,  
 And muses how he shall describe the scene,  
 I, bending on the living light my brow,  
 Followed along the lines, and sought to trace,  
 Now up, now down, and round the circle now.  
 I lookt on many a love-persuading face  
 Deckt with Another's light, and their own eyes  
 Smiling, and action of all noble grace.  
 The universal form of Paradise  
 My glance had gathered as a whole immense,  
 But did no single part yet signalize;  
 And round I turned with will rekindled thence  
 To ask my Lady what these matters be  
 Concerning which my mind was in suspense.  
 One thing I meant, another fronted me:  
 Weening to look again on Beatrice,  
 A glory-vested Elder did I see.  
 His lineaments were overspread with bliss  
 Benignant, kindly was his mien and eye,  
 Betokening a father's love in this.  
 "And she,—where is she?" was my sudden cry:  
 Whereat he answered: "To fulfill thy yearning  
 Beatrice urged me from my place on high:  
 Third from supreme the circle, which discerning,  
 Thou shalt again behold her countenance  
 Shine down from where her worth a throne is earn-  
 ing."

*Speaks St.  
 Bernard*

Without reply I lifted up my glance  
 And saw her, where a coronal she wore  
 Woven from out the eternal radiance.  
 From welkin whence the highest thunders roar  
 Has never mortal eye so distant been,  
 Though sunken deep beneath the ocean-floor,  
 As mine from Beatrice; but 'twas so keen  
 No distance mattered, since her features beaming  
 Shone down on me without a blur between.

"O Lady in whom my living hope is teeming,  
 And who didst once endure to leave the trace  
 Of thy dear feet in Hell for my redeeming,  
 In all the worth and beauty finding place  
 In things thou hast enabled me to see,  
 I recognize thy virtue and thy grace.  
 Thou leddest me along from slave to free  
 By all those ways, by all expedients  
 Whereby the power to do so lay in thee.  
 Preserve in me thine own magnificence,  
 So that my spirit through thy healing, may  
 Content thee as it slips the coil of sense."—

Far as she seemed, on hearing me so pray  
 She smiled and lookt: then to the Fountain-head  
 Eternal turned her shining eyes away.

"In order," now the holy Elder said,  
 "That thou complete thy course,— whence holy love  
 Dispatched me and true orisons have sped,—  
 Let thy fleet glances through this garden rove,  
 For better will such sight thy vision steel  
 Upon the ray divine to mount above.

And she, the Queen of Heaven, for whom I feel  
 Love's utter flame, will grant us furtherance,  
 For reason that I am her Bernard leal."—

Like him who from Croatia, perchance,  
 Comes to see our Veronica, well known  
 Through old report, and cannot sate his glance,

*Dante's prayer  
 to the Heavenly  
 Beatrice*

But thinks within, so long as it be shown,  
 "My Lord and very God, Christ Jesus Mine,  
 And were these features once thy very own?"—  
 Such was I, gazing at that living shrine  
 Of charity, who in the world below  
 By contemplation tasted peace divine.  
 "This blithesome being wilt thou never know,  
 O son of grace," such was his further note,  
 "With eyes but fixed here at the bottom so;  
 But mark the circles to the most remote  
 Until thou shalt the enthronèd Queen descry,  
 To whom this realm is subject and devote."—  
 I raised mine eyes; and as the morning sky  
 Displays a point of the horizon bright  
 Beyond that of the westering sun, so I,  
 As going with my glance from vale to height,  
 Beheld a region at the verge extreme  
 Surpassing all the other front in light.  
 And as, where we expect the chariot-beam  
 That Phaëton guided ill, the glows increase,  
 Fading away on either hand, the gleam  
 Illumined so that Oriflamme of peace  
 In the live center, while on either side  
 In equal measure did the splendor cease.  
 And at that center I saw, on wing flung wide,  
 A thousand jocund angels sweep along,  
 In glow and ministry diversified.  
 There, smiling on their games and at their song,  
 I saw a Beauty that was bliss indwell  
 The eyes of all the other holy throng.  
 Yet were my wealth of diction parallel  
 With wealth of fancy, rash were the emprise  
 The least of her delights to strive to tell.  
 Then holy Bernard, when he saw mine eyes  
 Fastened upon the object of his yearning,  
 His own in her did so imparadise  
 As to make my desire to look more burning.

*Bernard directs  
 the Poet to look  
 up to the Queen  
 of Heaven*

*The quieter tone  
 of this canto,  
 with its lovely,  
 familiar images  
 of the bees, the  
 Northman in  
 Rome, the pil-  
 grim in the  
 temple of his  
 vow, the Croa-  
 tian gazing  
 upon the pic-  
 ture of his  
 Saviour, the  
 angels sporting  
 about the beau-  
 tiful Queen,—  
 is in marked  
 artistic contrast  
 with the splen-  
 dors and inten-  
 sity of the  
 Thirtieth*

## XXXII

## ORDER OF PLACES IN THE MYSTIC AMPHITHEATER

That contemplator took the office free  
 Of teacher, while intent upon his bliss,  
 Beginning with these holy words to me:  
 "The wound by Mary balm'd and covered, this  
 That woman fair reposing at her feet  
 Inflicted, opening the cicatrice.  
 Beneath her third in order has her seat  
 Rachel, and thou seest at her side  
 Beatrice. Below these in order meet  
 Sara, Rebecca, Judith, and that bride,  
 Great-grandame of the singer who for grief  
 Of his own guilt the *Miserere* cried:  
 From rank to rank descending, these in chief  
 Mayst thou behold, as, naming each one, I  
 Go downward through the Rose from leaf to leaf.  
 And from the seventh degree, as from on high  
 To it, are Hebrew women cutting through  
 All petals of the Flower successively;  
 For these, according to the point of view  
 Whencelookt their faith to Christ, compose a blended  
 Wall that divides the sacred stair in two.  
 Upon this side where every petal splendid  
 Is full in bloom, are seated in their places  
 All who believed in Christ not yet descended;  
 And those half-circling ranks, with vacant spaces  
 On the other side, with happy intuition  
 To Christ already risen turned their faces.  
 And just as here the glorious position  
 Of Heaven's Lady, with the others one by one  
 Below it, constitute so great division,  
 So counterposed is that of mighty John,  
 Who bore the desert, martyrdom in fine,  
 And, holy still, two years in Hell thereon;

Mary  
 Eve

Rachel

Sara,  
 Rebecca,  
 Judith,  
 Ruth

For the Dia-  
 gram see Gard-  
 ner's "Temple  
 Primer"

Between his  
 own death and  
 that of his Lord



And Francis, Benedict, and Augustine,  
With others hitherward from row to row  
Continue downward the dividing line.  
Now see high Providence Divine, and know  
That one and the other phase of our believing  
Shall to this garden equally bestow.  
And know that down from yonder circle, cleaving  
Across, midway on the partitions two,  
Sit they, no meed of merit so retrieving,  
But meed of others, by conditions due;  
For these are souls who did the flesh divest  
Before they could make any choices true.  
This by their countenances may be guessed  
And by the tune their childish voices hum,  
If thou but lookest well and listenest.  
Now doubtest thou, and doubting makes thee dumb;  
But I will shatter for thee the strong chain  
Of subtle thought which is so cumbersome.  
The boundless amplitudes of this domain  
No particle of accident admit,  
More than of hunger, thirst, or any pain,  
For Law Eternal has established it  
In what thou seest, that with exactitude  
Duly the ring doth to the finger fit.  
Wherefore this swiftly hasting multitude,  
Seeking true life, are not without causation  
Placed at a higher or lower altitude.  
The King through whom reposing is this nation  
In so great love and in such Paradise  
That none aspires to loftier consummation,  
All minds creating in his own glad eyes,  
At His good pleasure doth with grace endue  
Diversely; and here let the fact suffice.  
And this expressly is made clear to you  
In Scripture, by that twin-embrothered pair  
Who even in their mother angry grew.

*Baptized  
children*

*The different  
complexions of  
Jacob and Esau  
symbolize the  
variations in  
the gift of grace*

Whence fittingly the light supremely fair  
 May crown us with a chaplet of that grace  
 According to the color of the hair.  
 They stand then, not by merit of their ways,  
 At different stages, only differing  
 Themselves in primal keenness of their gaze.  
 So, when the centuries were at the spring,  
 Sufficient was the parents' faith, along  
 With native innocence, for rescuing;  
 And when the centuries were no longer young,  
 'Twas needful that the males by circumcision  
 Should have their innocent pinions rendered strong;  
 But since the era of free grace has risen,  
 If lacking perfect baptism into Christ,  
 Such innocence has been kept down in prison.  
 Look now upon the face most like to Christ  
 In its fair lineaments, whose radiance bright  
 Alone can make thee fit to look on Christ."—  
 I saw rain down upon her such delight  
 Carried by those intelligences good  
 Created all for soaring through that height,  
 That whatsoever I before had viewed  
 Did never so suspend my soul in wonder  
 Nor show me of God so great similitude.  
 And that Love who had flown before thereunder  
 Singing: "Hail Mary, full of grace benign!"—  
 Now spread in front of her his wings asunder.  
 Responses to the minstrelsy divine  
 Rang through the blessed Court from all and some,  
 Making all features more serenely shine.  
 "O holy Father, who endurest to come  
 For me down here, quitting the blissful quire  
 Where by divine allotment is thy home,  
 Who is that Angel who with glad desire  
 Looks in the eyes of our own Empress yon,  
 Enamored so, he seems a flame of fire?"—

*The rime again  
on the sacred  
name*

So turned I to the teaching of that one  
     Who gathered beauty out of Mary's face  
     As does the star of morning from the sun.  
 And he to me: "All confidence and grace  
     Are in him, much as ever was conferred on  
     Angel or soul, and willing is our praise,  
 For this is he who brought the palm as guerdon  
     To Mary down, when took without distrust  
     The very Son of God our fleshly burden.  
 But follow with thine eyes now, for I must  
     Pursue the theme, and mark the throng of those  
     Great peers of this most holy realm and just.  
 The twain who most enraptured there repose,  
     Through being next neighbors to Augusta fair,  
     Are as the double roots of this our Rose.  
 He who upon the left is next her there  
     Is that First Sire by whose audacious taste  
     Mankind is savoring such bitter fare.  
 That ancient Father of Holy Church, once graced  
     By Christ with keys of this fair realm, beside  
     Our Lady and upon her right, is placed.  
 And that one who beheld before he died  
     All grievous days of her purchased for us  
     At cost of lance and nails, Christ's own fair Bride,  
 Sits next that Father; and over against him thus  
     That Leader under whom were fed with manna  
     The folk ungrateful, headstrong, mutinous.  
 Opposite Peter seest thou seated Anna,  
     So happy in her daughter that no whit  
     She moves her eyes away to sing Hosanna.  
 Our greatest of housefathers opposite  
     Sits Lucy, who impelled thy Lady down  
     When thou wast heading straight toward the Pit.  
 But since Time speeds along thy trance to drown,  
     Here let us pause, like prudent tailor who  
     Patterns according to the cloth the gown;

*The Seraph  
Gabriel*

*The Poet of the  
Divine does not  
need to take  
thought for the  
dignity of his  
allusions.  
Let us call him  
an architect, with  
an eye to sym-  
metry. "Para-  
diso" exceeds  
"Purgatorio" by  
only three lines*

And to the Primal Love turn we our view,  
So that, on visionary wing upspeeding,  
Thou pierce as in thee lies his radiance through.  
Yet lest thou, peradventure, while receding,  
Flutter thy wings, advancing but in thought,  
Let grace be our petition, grace exceeding  
Through her with power to help thee must be sought;  
And do thou follow me with adoration  
That from my word thy heart be severed not."—  
Here he began this holy supplication:—

*Compare the  
close of Canto v*

XXXIII

THE PRAYER OF ST. BERNARD. THE ULTIMATE VISION

"Daughter of thine own son, thou Virgin Mother,  
 Of the eternal counsel issued fated,  
 Lowlier and loftier than any other,  
 To such nobility hast thou translated  
 Man's nature that its Maker did not spurn  
 To make Himself the thing that He created.  
 Beneath thy heart was made again to burn  
 The Love by virtue of whose warmth withal  
 This Flower has blossomed in the peace eterne.  
 A living torch here art thou to us all  
 To kindle love, and down where mortals sigh  
 Thou art a fount of hope perennial.  
 Thou art so prevailing, Lady, and so high  
 That who wants grace and will to thee not run  
 Would have his longing without pinions fly.  
 Thy lovingkindness fails to succor none  
 Imploring it, but often is so free  
 As to anticipate the orison.  
 In thee is mercy, pity is in thee,  
 In thee munificence, in thee a host  
 Of human virtues are in unity.  
 This man, who hither from the nethermost  
 Pool of the world comes making observation  
 Of spiritual natures, ghost on ghost,  
 Now doth to thee of grace make supplication  
 That he by vision may uplift his being  
 Still higher toward the Ultimate Salvation.  
 And I, who never burned for my own seeing  
 More than I do for his, imploring pray  
 With all my soul, and pray for thine agreeing,  
 That thou drive every mortal cloud away  
 Which darkens round him, with thine interceding,—  
 Be the Chief Joy unveiled to him today.

*Compare the  
 Invocation to  
 Mary by  
 Chaucer*

Hear, all-prevailing Queen, my further pleading,  
 Keep his affections through thy vigilance  
 Sound for him, after vision so exceeding.  
 Quell by thy watchcare baser human wants:  
 Lo, yonder, Beatrice with all the blest  
 Claspings their hands to thee are suppliants."—  
 The venerated eyes, belovèd best  
 Of God, attent on him who made the prayer,  
 Showed us her pleasure in devout request;  
 Then plunged into the Light Eternal, where  
 We may not think of any creature turning  
 An eye that penetrates so clearly there.  
 And I who to the goal of every yearning  
 Was drawing near, slaked, as was meet for me,  
 And satisfied the thirst within me burning.  
 Then Bernard beckoned to me smilingly  
 To look aloft; but I already grew  
 Of my own accord as he would have me be;  
 Because, becoming purified, my view  
 Now more and more was entering the ray  
 Of the deep Light that in itself is true.  
 Thenceforth my seeing was more than tongue can say,  
 Yields our discourse before the Light Supreme,  
 And violated memory falls away.  
 Like him who sees while dreaming, and the dream  
 Remains thereafter traced upon his feeling,  
 While memory holds thereof no other gleam,  
 Even such am I; for though the great revealing  
 Fades almost all away from me, yet flow  
 Its drops of sweetness in my heart distilling.  
 Thus in the sun evanishes the snow;  
 Upon the light leaves by the zephyr drifted  
 The wisdom of the Sibyl perished so.  
 O Light Supreme, who art so high uplifted  
 From mortal thought, still let my mind with some  
 Of what thou didst appear to me, be gifted,

*Cf. "In Memoriam," xcv:  
 "Vague words,  
 but ah how hard  
 to frame". . .*

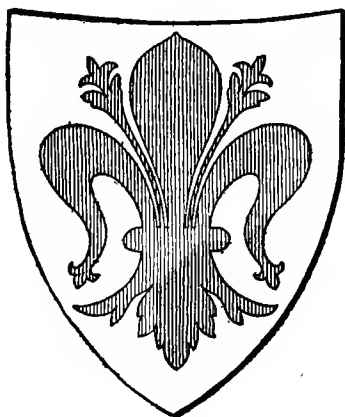
And dower my tongue with so great masterdom  
That one sole sparkle of thy glory be  
Thereby transmitted to the folk to come;  
For by some glimpses caught by memory,  
And by some echo in these rimes, perchance  
Better shall be conceived thy victory.  
Pierced by the vivid living radiance  
Methinks I had been lost, if by the sight  
Bewildered, I had turned aside my glance;  
And I remember, till I could unite  
My gaze therewith, my hardihood to dare  
The vision of the Goodness Infinite.  
O plenteous grace, whence I presumed to bear  
The stress of the Eternal Light, till thirst  
Was consummated in the seeing there!  
I saw in its abysmal deep immerst,  
Together in one volume bound with love,  
What is throughout the universe dispersst:  
Substance and accidents all thereabove  
So interfused in property and mood,  
That what I say gives but scant glimpse thereof.  
Of this same fusion do I think I viewed  
The universal form, for uttering  
This word, I feel ampler beatitude.  
To me more Lethë doth one moment bring  
Than five and twenty centuries for the emprise  
Whence Argo's shade set Neptune wondering.  
So was my spirit gazing, all surmise,  
Steadfast, intent, in absolute repose,  
And evermore enkindled through the eyes.  
In presence of that radiance one grows  
So rapt, it is impossible the soul  
Could yield to turn aside to other shows;  
Because the Good, which is volition's goal,  
All gathers there, and the deficient rest  
Outside it, there becomes a perfect whole.

Now will my words fall even shorter, in quest  
 Of my remembrance, than the infant lore  
 Of him whose tongue is moistened at the breast.  
 Not that the Living Light I saw gave more  
 Than one sole semblance to my contemplation,  
 For it is always what it was before;  
 But by my gathered strength of observation,  
 One sole appearance, unto me thus seeing,  
 Was ever changing with my transformation.  
 To me within the luminous deep being  
 Of Lofty Light appeared three circles, showing  
 Three colors, and in magnitude agreeing;  
 And from the First appeared the Second flowing  
 Like Iris out of Iris, and the Third  
 Seemed fire that equally from both is glowing.  
 O but how scant, how feeble any word  
 To my conceit! and this to what I viewed  
 Is such, to call it little were absurd.  
 O Light Eterne, who dost thyself include,  
 Who lovest, smiling at thy own intents,  
 Self-understanding and self-understood!  
 That circling which in thee seemed effluence  
 Of light reverberated, by my view  
 Surveyed awhile in its circumference,  
 Within itself of its own proper hue  
 Seemed painted with the effigy of man,  
 Whereat my sight was wholly set thereto.  
 As the geometer, intent to scan  
 The measure of the circle, fails to trace,  
 Think as he may, some feature of the plan,  
 Such I at the strange vision of the Face:  
 How the image fits the circle, fain aright  
 Would I perceive, and how it there finds place;  
 But my own wings were not for such a flight—  
 Except that, smiting through the mind of me,  
 There came fulfillment in a flash of light.

*An instant of  
 perfect fulfill-  
 ment*



Here vigor failed the lofty fantasy;  
    But my volition now, and my desires,  
    Were moved like wheel revolving evenly  
By Love that moves the sun and starry fires.



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